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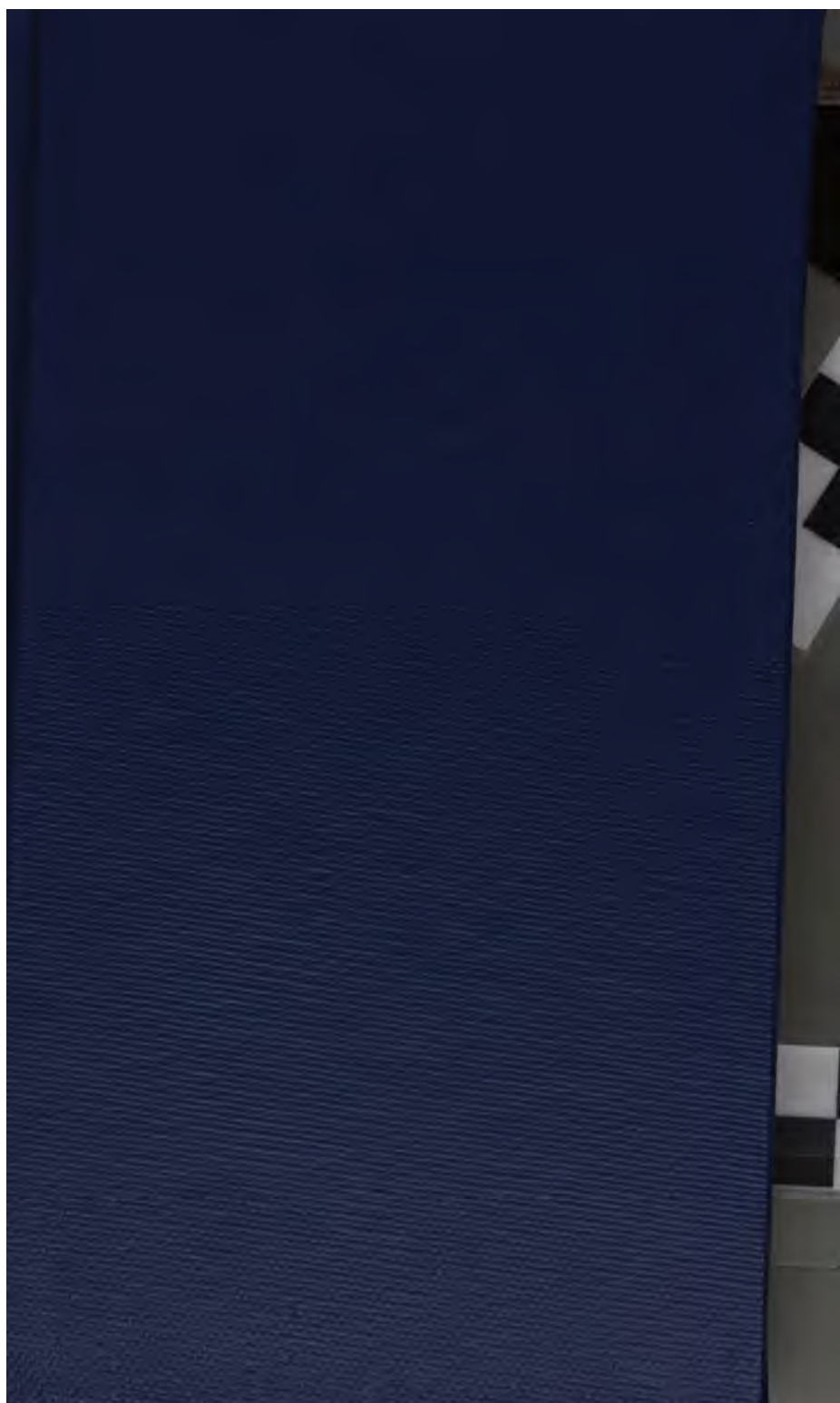
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BROOKLANDS

A

SPORTING BIOGRAPHY

BY

HERBERT BYNG HALL K.S.F.

AUTHOR OF

"Highland Sports," "Exmoor,"

"Spain and the Seat of War in Spain,"

&c. &c.

IN TWO VOLS.



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T. C. NEWBY,

30. WELBECK STREET,

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STANBARD & DIXON, LITH. 1, POLAND ST.



DEDICATION.

By Permission,

TO HIS GRACE

THE DUKE OF BEAUFORT, K.G.

ETC. ETC. ETC.

WHO RANKS HIGH AMONG MEN,

HIGH AMONG SPORTSMEN,

BUT HIGHER THAN EITHER

AS A

TRUE ENGLISH GENTLEMAN.

INTRODUCTION.

It was my happiness, a lot awarded to few in this life, to possess a dear, a true and sincere friend, one who shared the pleasures of my boyhood's home, as my manhood's cares.

At school we studied together, played together, and fought with another, and having fought, became firmer friends than ever.

The periods which parted us during his brief life were short—our position was in great measure similar, both as regards tastes and professions. I loved him well, and lost him early—a fever, of only a few days' duration, released him from this world of care, and left me to sorrow with no common bitterness, for one who was gifted with far more than the usual virtues and attain-

ments allotted to man. It was his habit as his constant pleasure, to note down from time to time even the most trifling occurrences of every day life ; from this Journal, for the possession of which I am indebted to his laughter-loving sister, Gussy, I have culled such portions, as appeared to me to contain more than common interest and amusement, and while the compilation even of his most puerile thoughts and acts has caused me a painful pleasure, I trust they will not be found without interest to the general reader, more particularly, those who are fond of the sports of the field, divested of their coarser attributes.

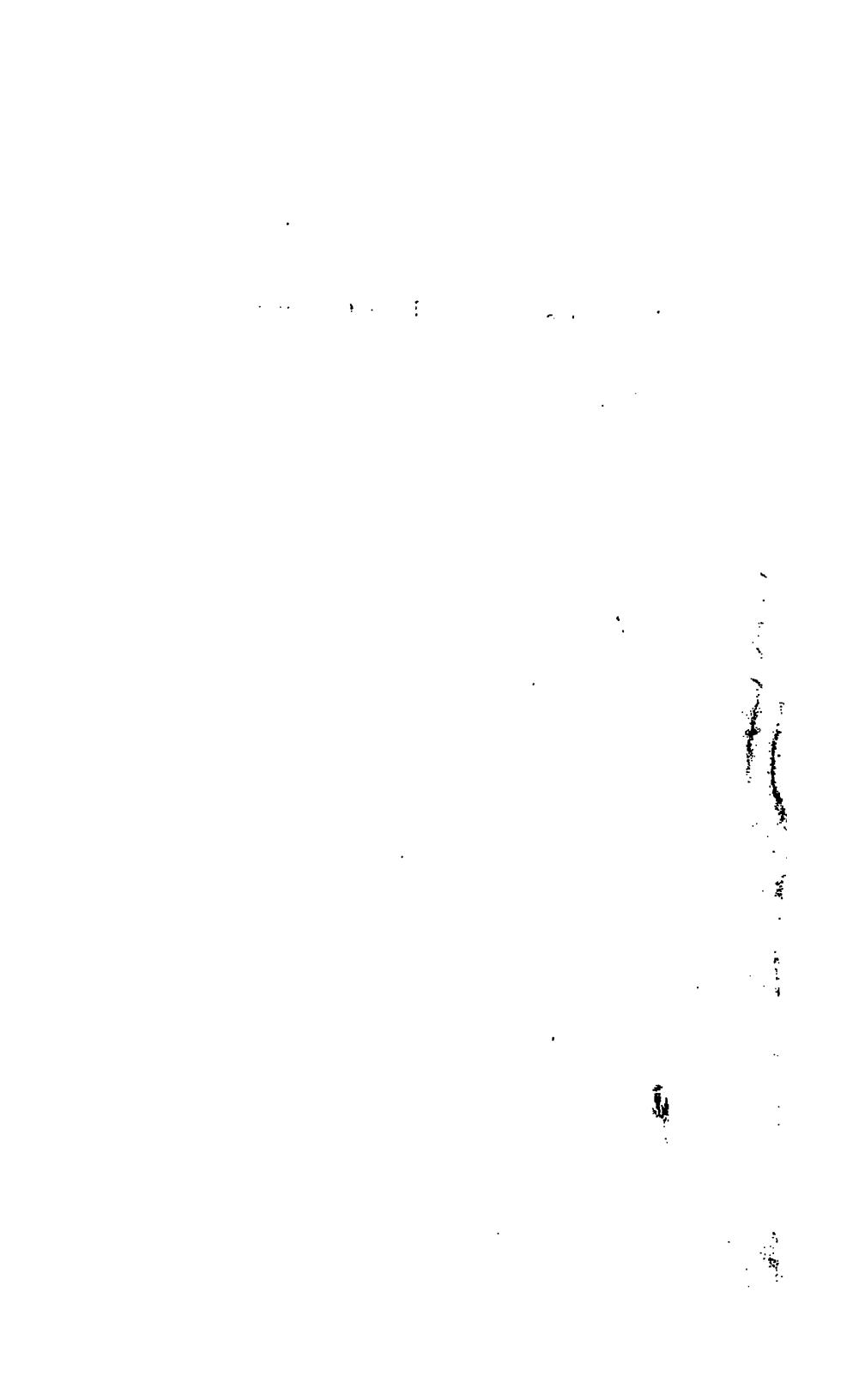
The portrait of my friend, which accompanies this Biography, I may with perfect truth declare, has been so placed there, entirely by the desire of many personal friends, who were desirous to possess it. And by permission, with difficulty obtained, of a portion of the Brookland family still living, who on no other grounds would have permitted it to go forth to the gaze of a public to whom he was little known.

For the illustrations, I have to thank a most talented, and, I trust, rising young artist—Mr. G. W. Horton, of Cheltenham—and it will be a source of gratification to me, should their appreciation be of service to him with the public, and thus open a channel for that success which his merit as an artist make so justly due to him.

THE AUTHOR.

Louth Park,

April 8th, 1852.



BROOKLANDS.

CHAPTER I.

“How like a comedy is life !
With shifting scenes and changes rife,
Some sad, some gay ; but to the wise
A moral lesson each supplies.”

THE SUNRISE.

MY home was Brooklands, in the Vale of Berkeley ; one of merrie England's most glorious vales ; need I add more to prove the luxuriant beauty of its home scenery, or the enjoyments offered to man as an abiding place. It was, indeed, a rich and smiling portion of our noble Fatherland ; which under God, year by year, increases in natural charms, as I pray may its people in prosperity.

I was born in the good old hospitable month of December, when rounds of beef and well fed turkeys are devoured in abundance, and bright fires blaze on the hearths of old England, in the most delightful of all delightful seasons for a sportsman—as well as the merriest of merry periods for the happy and light-hearted,—when hunting the fox in the morning and the slipper at night. And many a pretty little morocco slipper have I run to earth, carefully hidden amid innumerable flounces—shooting woodcocks in low bottom copse, and telling love tales to ears ready to listen, while their owners sat on silk ottomans, made time pass cheerfully.

Ah! those were merry days, those Christmas gatherings of friends and relations dear, at the old Hall at home.

It was the day previous to that of Christmas, yet not exactly Christmas-eve, for the hour was about 2 P.M. that I first beheld the bright sunshine; a happy omen, so at least said my kind old nurse, and the realities of life have alone contradicted her. My admirable mother had been expecting for some

days to add to the family circle of the Westerns, and the worthy Doctor Knox, located at Brooklands, had already eaten sundry good dinners, played several games at piquet with the Squire, and swallowed sundry bottles of first rate port to the health of the expected guest, ere the hoped for event took place. On the morning of the day in question, however, his patient had become more nervous and restless—I conclude, ladies are a little nervous on such occasions. Nevertheless, as the hounds met at no great distance from the Hall, my father joined them. Towards the afternoon they found in a covert some eight miles distant, and after a brilliant run, without a check, killed in the open near his own park, through which they had chased their fox.

My mother's time had come; and when she heard the huntsman's horn, cheering on his gallant pack, she felt cheered also—and I, Frederick Western, was born, almost at the very moment that the varmint, dead beat, gamely delivered up his life and body to his staunch and eager pursuers. I may, there-

fore, very justly say I was born a sportsman; inasmuch, as when my good paternity elated by the first-rate sport he had enjoyed, entered the Hall, brush in hand, for the fox had been killed on his estate, and beheld the nurse approaching with a fine addition to his family, as she pronounced me to be in her arms; he ran the brush across my little face, and then with tears of delight and affection glistening in his dear old eyes, he declared I was born a foxhunter, and should be christened Nimrod. To this my mother most decidedly objected, and as her will was generally law, though to do her justice, she wielded her power with the most gentle sway, I was named Frederick. Nevertheless, my father said truly, through life I have been devoted to the sport, though purely as a sportsman who loves a horse and a dog, as the delights of the country.

Suffice that the head of my house was an English gentleman of other days, whose ancestors did not come into this glorious country with William the Conqueror or any of his French followers. No; he could

boast of the pure unadulterated blood of a Saxon; and from the top of his head to the sole of his foot, he was an Englishman and a sportsman. His property consisted of some four thousand acres of rich well wooded and luxuriant land in the Vale of Berkeley. The name of his place was Brooklands,—as such, at least, it is pleasing to my heart to recollect it. His income was derived almost entirely from the land on which he lived, and yet as in heart he was not so then, so would he not have now been a Protectionist, save that he ever protected the poor and the unhappy, the widow and the orphan. He expended his means liberally and like a gentleman—lived on the very best terms with his neighbours, and was a Churchman. Yet, he never by word or deed endeavoured to oppress those who disagreed with or dissented from him in civil or religious opinions. Add to this, he was a County Magistrate, who administered justice—and for all that he went a hunting and rode in the front rank. And further, I his son Fred, believe him to have been a good man, and a

good Christian, without any of the fulsome mouth religion among those of the day we live in, who imagine themselves fifty-fold his superiors.

In order in some measure to describe him, I will say, that had any friend or visitor chanced to have arrived at Brooklands early, at the season of the year when the Earl Fitz's hounds hunted our side of the county, which they did and still do on alternate months, if the meet was not very distant, they would have been as certain as the sparks fly upwards, was it a hunting morning, to find Squire Western, or the Lord of Brooklands, for so was he familiarly denominated, standing with his back to the dining room fire wiping his spectacles. He was a most aristocratic looking man, at that period possibly about sixty years of age, or less; in height about five feet ten, firmly, though not robustly built, with hair already grey; fine brilliant eyes and a Roman nose—the only thing Roman about him. His leather unmentionables, in the olden style, were a trifle tight, and his tops somewhat of a tan colour

(a vile fashion, which some always on the look out for novelty, are attempting to revive); but the polish on the boot itself might have served as a looking-glass, while his spurs were as bright as well cleaned silver. His blue coat with metal buttons was large and baggy, with side pockets; but altogether, there was no mistaking him for what he really was—a fine kind-hearted old English gentleman and sportsman who hunted with the beau Duke of Gloucestershire, and dined with him, how often, and few more welcome for all that, had he lived he would have voted for Lord John.

My lady mother was precisely a fitting mate for such a lord. She was a well born, well bred, refined, and gentle woman, who entered with enthusiasm into all the pursuits and pleasures of her husband and his sons, welcomed his friends, and attended to his comforts. She had a companion and two pets, my laughter-loving sister Gussy, and a bright eyed varmint little Scotch terrier, called Wasp. The former loved hunting as well as my father or myself, when allowed;

while the latter did frequently play truant from the ladies' boudoir to follow in the rear of the flying hounds.

So much for my respected and well beloved parents. I have introduced them in a great measure in detail the more clearly to define the stock from whence I sprung, and in which I ever felt pride. At the period of my birth, and for many subsequent years, strict economy was a term unheard of and unnecessary in reference to the Brookland establishment; the stables were well filled with hunters, the house rarely free from guests. But that evil period in history—the Railway era—came, with the devastating effects of an express train in the centre of a flock of sheep. And my good father, who like many wiser men, saw the earth rise through the centre of his estate to form a line to G——, in an evil hour succumbed to the all-powerful charm of gold, “gold,” and was persuaded to make fortunes for his younger children. And faith! the reign of “King Hudson” proved anything but a glorious one to him. He did make fortunes,

that is misfortunes, for himself, as for his well beloved sons. Corbeau, his favourite and admirable jet black hunter; Brilliant, his pet Gussy's beautiful mare; and my dear mother's cob, Punch, which drew her four-wheeler; with the addition of the family hack, Silvertail, hunter, or anything when wanted, were soon all that remained of a stud of sixteen. The chariot stood unused in the coach-house; and although Mr. Western still went out with the hounds occasionally, and from time to time received a few familiar friends at his table, the light of other days had faded at the old Hall at home. And far more painful than all was the knowledge that his cheerful spirit was giving way to the feeling that he had injured those he best loved by speculation, of which matter he was totally ignorant. And so the hitherto brilliant laughing eye began to fade; the healthy appearance to give way to mental suffering, untold to those around him, whom he loved too well to pain. But they loved him not less fondly. And so they saw and felt all he vainly endeavoured to hide.

In the meantime my elder brother, the heir to the estate, never a first-rate sportsman, though a lover of hounds and hunting, gloried in his diplomatic duties as a Secretary of Legation among the meerschaum smokers, while I held his Majesty's commission as a full-pay Lieutenant, and my younger fraternity was about to enter at Christ Church, it was said to be a parson ; if so, I fancy the black-coat will often show us the lead in the Vale.

It will now be necessary that I name one or two persons on the Brookland Estate more particularly connected with my tale. The one, Farmer Barleycorn, an awkward sort of would-be squire among the village belles, who had his newspapers addressed to him, Zacariah Barleycorn, Esq., the Elms, Gloucestershire. He resided in a low-built farm house, with a yew tree before the door cut into the shape of a peacock ; and I once counted nine laurels in his garden ; therefore why the dignified appellation of the Elms for his thatched roof mansion who can say ? not I. His superiority, I presume, among

his friends and fellow labourers in the neighbourhood consisted in his always having a few clear hundreds at command over and above his rental; a good possession, forsooth, yet not a cause of discontent by any means I should imagine, nor precisely a patent of gentility. His inferiority to those of a higher class, therefore, with whom his hundreds could give him no place, being utterly without education, rested solely on a silly desire to make himself what he was not; for in reality he was a kind-hearted, humane, and honest man. He would appear occasionally at the covert side, on a horse whose real value was possibly twenty-five pounds, and ride at times recklessly, at other times indifferently. When my father approached him, Barleycorn would touch his hat in a sort of how-are-you-squire way.

Squire Western: "Good morning, farmer."

"Good day, good day, sir."

"Well, how are the times with you, Barleycorn? Glorious weather for hunting, and equally good for farming, I take it."

"Times are bad, Sir, very bad indeed. If

things goes on as they have done of late, farmers must give up port wine, Squire, and take to small beer. I gave a matter of fifty for this nag, Sir, fifty !” My father looked up with astonishment.

“Aye ! Barleycorn a nice horse.”

“Yes, Sir, fifty ! I declare all the money. I could have sold him for double the amount in a year a-gone, but now, Sir, they ‘hex-ports’ ’um—no, I means ‘himports’ ’um ; but its much the same, is it not ? from France and Olland. In fact, there is nothing but foreign cattle in the country, and we have no chance with home bred nags. Yes, Sir, even turnips I am told come from Russia by tons weight, and of course we farmers cannot live. We are absolutely ruined by game preservers and the advance of the times.”

“But you have your land on your own terms, Barleycorn ; and if you are in fear of being ruined, why not give it up ? I do not desire to have any one as my tenant who—”

“Oh, ay ! but, Sir, I think the hounds have found ;” and away goes the ruined Squire Barleycorn, while Daddy, putting his

sleek black hunter, Corbeau, at an awkward stile which lands him in the field with the hounds, says to himself, "That uneducated discontented braggadacio is a humbug."

The run over, the fox killed, my father returns leisurely homewards—he is getting old and an hour's good hunting-run contents him—when he observes a respectable man of sixty or more, dressed as a farmer ought to be, leaning against a gate superintending the penning of some sheep, "Here, Harry, my man," he cried out; "how are you? be good enough just to fasten my curb chain. Thank you; that's a good fellow—how is your family, and how are you—thriving I hope?" "All well at home, thank you, Sir—we do not get richer, but I see no great reason to complain; corn is low, true enough—but my land is good, and my landlord better. So we must even do our best, and God will help us."

"And so he will, be assured, my honest fellow; I wish I had a larger and a better farm to give you, you should have it. Good day!—here's my hand." And thus, as he

jogged home, he soliloquized : " Would that men instead of complaining of evils, hard enough in all truth to bear, would endeavour by double energy and industry, if not entirely to remove them, at least, to prevent their becoming worse. True enough, the minority may now suffer from the late wise political measures—what then ! the majority who scarcely existed a few years since, now live."

CHAPTER II.

SOME years since, previous to these railway disasters, my younger brother and I had just come home from Eton ; my blue-eyed sister, Gussy, received us at the lodge-gate as the chaise drove up ; we forthwith alighted, and the trio walked joyfully towards the house. The sweet girl then and there informed us that our elder brother, who had left Christ Church, and was learning diplomacy under Beau Palmerston, at the Foreign Office, was expected home at the end of the week ; that the Earl's hounds met at Keswell on the following Saturday ; and that Farmer Barleycorn had purchased a new five-year

old, called Jumper, which he declared could jump the Severn ; also that dear old dad had declared we should have a mount by turns on Silvertail, or maybe on one of his other nags. Happy were those days—never to be forgotten, while memory lasts—when trifles caused so much hilarity ; joyful was our meeting ; endless the plans formed for amusement, hunting, shooting, and coursing. As far as relates to my own personal prowess as a sportsman, I beg to announce that I was first initiated into the science of gentleman-jockeyship at some juvenile donkey-races which we got up among our young friends of the neighbourhood, and which came off in the park during the summer holidays ; and never was Derby or St. Leger looked forward to with more unfeigned delight. Donkeys were brought into requisition from all parts ; a course was staked out—a straight run home duly roped in ; ladies and ladies'-maids employed to make silk jackets and caps, and front the bridles with the riders' colours. At length the bright and happy day arrived. No less than thirteen donkeys

had been entered for the valuable stake of half-a-crown each, p.p.; and, after four well-contested heats, I won it by a head, on a black donkey called the Duchess, belonging to a sweep, to whom I gave half my winnings: inasmuch as, in addition to the loan of the animal, which I had fed on corn and trained for a week previous, he lent me also an undeniable spur, into the mysteries of using which he had fully initiated me. This spur was unquestionably, from its form and make, against all sporting rules; and, had the question been submitted to the Jockey Club, it is possible both the sweep and Fred Western would never have divided the cash; but things passed over quietly. The sweep still hunts—and I fancy votes for the Duke; I still live to recollect the race; and as for the “noble” animal, the last time I ever saw it, it was carrying a very fearless pretty little girl, who was vainly endeavouring to induce it to go the contrary way to that on which it had determined: but the matter is indifferent, doubtless it is dead. Yet I never saw a dead donkey; reader, have you? The

happy evening of our arrival over, we, the brothers, retired to our sleeping sanctum—that is, I, Fred Western, and my more juvenile brother Arty, since a Christ Church man—sat over a blazing fire, in full confab as to the ways and means of passing our time agreeably. “Well,” said I, “this is glorious news. The Earl meets at Keswell on Saturday; we must both go, that’s decided. But we cannot both ride on one horse, that’s equally decided: and our paternity will certainly mount Corbeau, as will Gussy appear at the covert side on Brilliant. Brenda is lame, and Smasher is denied to us; for Thomas says, no hand but his own or Dad’s can hold him. I should like to try. Nevertheless, at all events, go we must, and well mounted too. Therefore, brother mine, I will tell you what I propose.—Let us walk over to-morrow to Farmer Barleycorn’s at the Elms, and ask if his paragon of a five-year old is for sale; if so, I shall try him with the hounds. As for attempting the Severn, that I shall leave to him. But if we have a run, and the brute can go one hundredth part as well

as he affirms, by the blood of my ancestors I will see the end of it." "Agreed," said Arty, adding, "but now as to costume. You know we cannot precisely appear at the covert side as we were wont to do, previous to being Etonians; besides, you are a fifth form gentleman, and can therefore, of course, don the scarlet coat or Montem toggery." "Unquestionably I can; moreover, I have built a pair of white cords on tick at Peters', but as yet I have not ventured on the outlay for tops. Hitherto I have worn knee dabs and Wellingtons, as we term knee-caps, and they must do." "Ah! perfectly. And I have a pair of white cord trousers; and as old Silvertail can go as straight as a crow, if the hounds run fast my costume will scarcely be remarked. But touching the tops. It occurs to me, Fred, as our illustrious elder brother, the Plenipo that is to be, could never have idled away so many terms at Christ Church, light weight as he is, without doing a little bit of amateur jock, or steeple-chasing or herring-hunting, or, at all events, appearing amongst the swells at the covert side,

inasmuch as he was a gentleman commoner, which implies he was no common gentleman, there can be no question but that among his kit we may discover a prize; and so thy legs, Fred, being of the rural order, may, I fancy without much difficulty, fill their interior with credit." "By jingo! a good thought; here, bring the candle, and let's at once to his excellency's chamber." We did so, and lo! within a wardrobe, the lower part of which was half-crammed with boots and shoes, to our joy and admiration, we there discovered a pair of tops; and what tops! new, bran new, polished, and of perfect elegance as to shape. Eagerly I seized the treasures, and not without difficulty, for the gentleman-commoner's legs were a trifle less robust than mine own: with sundry struggles I pulled them on, and with still more difficulty my younger fraternity pulled them off; but he quickly decided that legs swell at night, that rest and the cool morning air would effect the desired reduction of calf, and, with this conclusion, we bid one another a hearty good night, and were soon as fast

asleep as light hearts and tired bodies could make us.

As I descended the stairs to the breakfast-parlour on the following morning, the first person I encountered was my fair and bright-eyed sister. I saluted her with a tender pinch—I know not where at the moment; yet, if memory fails me not, she cried out somewhat loudly, “Have done, Fred. Are those your Eton ways?” “Yes, darling,” said I. “At Eton we are frequently assailed matutinally most severely in the breech, to give us an appetite for breakfast. So run, pet, and make the tea; for Arty and I have decided on a ramble to Farmer Barleycorn, to look at his new horse, and you must be of the party.” “With all my heart,” she replied, “but dispense for the future with your Etonian salutations. Bear in mind, you are now at home for the holidays.” “No need to be told of that, fair lady; so be quick with the bohea; I long to have a look at the river jumper.” No sooner was a hearty morning’s meal despatched, consisting of partridge pie and fried potatoes *ad libitum*,

the young lady soon making her appearance, well wrapped up, with thick walking boots, and fur cape, than we started, accompanied by Wasp. The morning was fine, but cold ; in fact—a thoroughly enjoyable winter's day ; and I, for one, declare that I know of few pleasures more agreeable, putting sporting out of the question, than that of a brisk walk in the winter season, with a cheerful party of well beloved friends, and a dog or two, as companions. Moreover, winter or summer it mattereth not, the rich vales of merry England have always a home and agreeable appearance, and barring those of Devon, few can surpass in brightness of aspect the luxuriant vale of Berkeley. Years, however, have passed—alas ! how rapidly ! —since that happy morning ; when we three went merrily along, now vaulting a stile, now dragging Gussy through a black thorn, to the detriment of cloak and bonnet, now handing her over a muddy ditch, now rambling through a well-known covert, flushing a pheasant or woodcock. I know not what might have been the thoughts of

Wasp, delighted as the little fellow appeared, both as regards his companions and their fun; all I can answer for is that I, Fred Western, had, for once in my life, a heart void of care, and a head full of mischief; and I fancy both brother and sister were precisely in the same position. At length, panting and laughing, we mounted up a steep ascent, then walked quickly along a narrow lane shaded by some fine elms, and at length beheld the residence of Farmer Barleycorn — pardon me, Z. Barleycorn, Esq., the Elms, Gloucestershire. As, however, some account of his abode may be interesting to those who reside in great cities and desire to learn the style in which gentlemen farmers live, I will even devote a new chapter to the subject of our visit.

CHAPTER III.

THE Elms—which, by the bye, would be better named Peacock Farm, from the fact, as I have already stated, of there being what was originally a fine yew-tree, concocted into a peacock with a flowing tail—stood on a gentle eminence overlooking one of the finest vales in England. The house was a moderate-sized low, irregular, building, sheltered solely by one or two elms, and the farm buildings in its rear. This building was thatched; and its outward appearance bore little of beauty or comfort. Nevertheless, the magnificent corn and hay-ricks, which stood hard by, indicated anything but a want

of protection, save the protection of fire-engines from incendiaries or others. Wasp gave notice of our approach by scattering a fine brood of turkeys, sending some score of ducks into a pea-soupy horse pool, and seizing a fat pig of the Chinese breed by his curly tail. Having called him off, we knocked at the squire's door, and were kindly and respectfully received by a middle-aged female—half housekeeper, half friend and associate, who opened the door to welcome us. "Ah, Miss Gussy! is that you? I am glad indeed to see you, ma'am. You are quite a stranger in these parts. And pray how is your worthy papa, and your good lady mother?" These queries having been responded to, the good woman continued: "And master Fred, and Arthur too! from Eton for the holidays I conclude. How they are grown! and Wasp too!" patting the little animal. "Pray walk in; I'm glad indeed to see you. So you walked over from the Hall. There will be fine doings there this Christmas, and all of you at home." "Indeed will there!" said I, as we entered through a narrow passage,

and were thence shewn into a clean little parlour; which, however, like all such parlours, was only to be used on specific occasions, highdays and holidays; consequently there was no fire, no comfort. The chairs were placed in situations that made them difficult to sit down on; over the chimney piece there was a gilded looking-glass; two or three pictures or prints hung round the room; not a book was to be seen, and the only thing approaching food for the mind was an old county newspaper. Even the looking-glass looked unsocial, with its horrid muslin cover to keep off the flies. And at length, forgetting my general courtesy, I fairly sat down on the edge of the table. Miss Arnold—for that was the good hostess's name—who appeared to have sense and kind feeling, understood our youthful discomfiture; and approaching Gussy, who being very cold was rubbing her little white hands to keep them warm, she apologized for the want of a fire, adding, "that if not objectionable she would find more comfort in their usual sitting room." "Objectionable! not a bit of it,"

chimed in Arty: "pray take us to a good fire. The kitchen and comfort, say I! and the best is generally found there." This point being settled, we were introduced into another room; something of the right sort, with a touch of the olden times, when farmers were generous, hearty farmers, and felt pride in their calling—as well they might. The fire blazed brightly, on which was cast a large log. The room was half parlour half kitchen, though used only as the former. Here and there the walls were adorned with daubs of old grandmamas and papas. The floor was half carpeted; but around, or rather on each side of the fire-place were settles, which kept the back of the sitter secure from draughts; and on each side of the fire-place an alderman might have sat and enjoyed his mug of home brewed. "This is the place for me, ma'am," said I, perhaps too freely; "worth all your half-and-half parlours in the world. By George, I can fancy a man who has paid his half-year's rent, and owns a few of yon ricks, on which he has raised no money, coming home after

a brilliant run with the Duke or the Earl, and finishing up the night with a pipe and a tumbler or two—just here where I now sit. Why such a man needs no king for a cousin, or fear of a sleepless night. Miss Arnold, when I sup with you, prithee set the good cheer here by the fireside, and I shall fancy I am truly entertained by an English yeoman. But where is Mr. Barleycorn. We have walked all the way from Brooklands to see the new nag he wishes to sell; I hear it is an out-and-outer. Where is he?—in the yard? shall we seek him?" But at this moment Barleycorn entered, and gave us a hearty welcome. "Well, Miss, but this is new indeed to see you up here. And these brothers of yours—how they do grow!—like swedes in a wet season, 'pon my life!" Now I always believed Farmer Barleycorn to be a good-natured (say if you like kind-hearted) man, and I believe he would do any little kindness for his friend or neighbour—perhaps a large one; for aught I know; but as I grew older I found he had one fault that I never could get over, which was, that

although, as I have said before, he possessed a few hundreds always beyond the world (and was therefore comparatively a rich man), he was never satisfied save with himself. If the weather was fine, it was too hot or too dry ; if wet, too wet, and so on. Having many of God's blessings, he never appeared sufficiently grateful. In other respects his faults lay more with the village damsels and the parson than himself. The parson, a good easy priest ! declared he was an example to the parish, because he was under his immediate control, and always gave half-a-crown in charity after a little bamboozling ; he being the only man in the parish besides the owner who could afford to give above a shilling. But the girls were the destruction of poor Barleycorn. They believed him to be worth his weight in gold : if so, he must have been a walking California. Therefore, at idle times, instead of improving his mind as well as his farm, he never looked into a book, and we boys sometimes fancied he could not read one ; and was given to wear fine waistcoats and finer cravats, and

at last I really began to fancy he expected to be asked to meet our beau Duke at dinner at Brooklands. But I believe the man's faults were in his head, and not in his heart; as is the case with many of his class, who are told and believe, instead of learning and judging—in proof of which, no sooner had I mentioned the new horse than he exclaimed heartily, “New horse! yes, I just have, Master Fred, such a horse as you never cast your eyes on, save Corbeau, your father's black hunter, I'll warrant; but you shall try him, and welcome. Let me see. Why, by dad, the Earl meets at Keswell on Saturday; so you shall try him then. I means to go myself on Blaze-away. If this weather lasts we shall have sport, and he'll carry your weight over the Severn.” “I have already heard of his being a first-rate river jumper, Barleycorn; but the Severn is broad; more-over the banks are somewhat muddy.” “Ah, never mind—never mind; put him at it straight, he'll go.”

Here Gussy laughed outright, and Arty winked at me; but even this did not entirely

settle the question. "Well, may we have a look at the horse, for it's a long walk home?" "Oh, certainly—certainly; but first have a bit of luncheon. Here, Miss Arnold—Sally, what have we got?" Now, as we had had a brisk morning's walk of some four miles, and being late, and accustomed to the bad habit of dining early also—that is lunching, as people term it—we were nothing loath, and the luncheon made its appearance. Notwithstanding the breakfast, a rough walk and a "sixteen-years-old" appetite made it heartily welcome to me, Fred Western, at least; and as I sat in that cozy nook, by the bright wood fire, I pictured to myself (having a knowledge that Barleycorn had a name for hospitality) the abundance which would be placed before us: "A two-quartern loaf, sweet, brown, home-made and home-baked," I whispered to Arty, with a salutation similar to that with which I had favoured Gussy in the morning; which made him start up, to the astonishment of all present; and I added, as he sat down again, not quite in such brotherly proximity, "A

Gloucestershire cheese as big as a beer-barrel ; a chine methinks, or a gammon, or both ; then either some rashers with eggs, black puddings—possibly a piggy has lately died—a cold pork pie, or a griskin. Then a flagon of ale for the male visitors, and some mulled elder-berry wine for Gussy.” Devil a bit of any one of them. The warmth of the fire and a light heart had caused my imagination to fly back to olden times, when such things were as ne’er may be again. Behold a maid of all work—God help the class ! from my heart I feel for them, much as their presence is unpleasing ; for I think it is painful to see the daughters of Eve turned into dirty slaves. Well, be it as it may, enter a maid of all work, with hands as black as coals, and eyes to match, who placed on the table a tray, forsooth, and a tray cloth—which for aught I know to the contrary was occasionally a towel—and on the tray appeared a bottle of “red wine” and a bottle of “white.” But whether the so-called red wine was Port and the white intended for Sherry, I cannot say ; as I did

not attempt to taste. There were also some sweet biscuits, and (believe it who can) some oranges ; and the only thing eatable was a piece of cold roast veal and some baker's bread. However, it was doubtless all very kind and all very genteel ; but imagination never could have pictured such an entertainment under such a roof, had not eyes seen it and throats swallowed. I attacked the veal ; and having refused the offer of either " red wine " or " white," declared I preferred the home-brewed malt on the sideboard ; but fancy, alas ! was again running wild, for it turned out sour cider.

No doubt all this change from hearty or natural warm-hearted hospitality, to attempts at absurd finery and aristocratic efforts, is attributed to Free-trade. Be it so. I am no Protectionist save as regards foxes and the unexampled heartiness which was wont to reign in the homes of our English yeomen. But come, Gussy, finish that red wine of yours ; and do you, Barleycorn, introduce us to your stud, for I am dying to see the nag. Be of the party, gentlemen sportsmen, who will—the more the merrier.

CHAPTER IV.

"A horse ! a horse ! a kingdom for a horse !"

BEHOLD the farm yard of Barleycorn : for brevity's sake I will drop all aristocratic appellations. Reader, let your imagination fancy a poetical illustration of this rural spot : A milkmaid, with bright eyes and rosy cheeks, milking an Alderney, the perfume of whose breath (the Alderney's not the milkmaid's), together with that from the new milk, vying with the honeysuckle, which hangs in clusters around the rustic farm portal ; a splendid game cock standing, in pride of place, and as if really conscious of

his pluck as his beauty, on some clean straw in the centre of several choice hens of the black Spanish breed, over whom he reigns by right of nature as by prowess ; some fine ducks, attended by a drake (fit subjects for a picture of Herring's) floating over the surface of a pond hard by, in which, their labour o'er, the farm teams allay their thirst and refresh their limbs ; on the one side of the yard are ranged the stables and corn sheds, on the other some splendid ricks, the centre as clean as draining order and fresh dry fodder could make it. Now put your imagination into your breeches pocket, and your pocket handkerchief to your nose, as poor dear Gussy did, and practically view the case and the place, not as nature made it, but the will of man. In other days I have been led to fancy, and forsooth I do so now at times, that a farmyard was a scene where hens cackle, ducks quack, pigs grunt, and cows bellow and are milked ; but since our once jolly English farmers have become grumbling Protectionists, all these pleasant fancies are vanished and obsolete ;

and what were once pleasing spots of rural industry and beauty are now in many instances become simply large yards, for the making and deposit of manure. Such, then, was the scene we beheld : a vast accumulation of mud, mire, and manure ; a dirty duck-pool ; and two still more dirty and disconsolate wallowing long-backed pigs. But our desire was the stable and its contents, not the yard and the piggeries ; and Gussy, nothing loth to see the river jumper, being well *chausée* (or, in plain English, having a good pair of cork-soled boots—which all girls blessed with pretty feet should have in the country), followed Barleycorn, who led the way, apologising for the dirt, and of course declaring the weather, not he, was in fault. As we step across the yard my juvenile fraternity thus addressed me : “ Recollect, Fred, if he is truly the sort of horse our good yeoman asserts, we toss up for choice ; head’s for Silvertail, tail’s for the Jumper.” “ Agreed,” said I, just signing the agreement with a brotherly slap on the back ; which made him sing out so loudly,

that, while Gussy screamed, Barleycorn, who had his hand on the stable door, threw it aside and rushed in; as a gander I had unconsciously run against, actually assaulted me in the calf of the leg, and increased the confusion. Order being restored, we entered the stable—such as it was—“all in the rough,” as Barleycorn truly asserted and we most fully admitted; and there stood two nags—a strong-looking grey mare, and the undeniable Jumper.

“Behold,” said Barleycorn, “look, Master Fred, you see a couple of ‘horses;’ fit to carry the Duke himself. The grey’s by The Pope out of Mr. Soapy Spongy’s* own sister to The Cardinal by Wiseman; a better mare never crossed a deep country with a heavy weight on her back. She has one fault, however—she rushes at her fences like a ‘mad bull from Rome,’ and requires a good steady hand, and a strong curb on her, to prevent her overreaching herself. And there, Miss Gussy, that’s the ‘harse’ Jumper; gen-

* Probably the present Mr. Spongy’s father.

tle as a lamb, carry you as quietly as Brilliant—or Master Arthur either; five-year-old and sound; the best fencer in all England; came over from Ireland; I bought him for fifty from an Irish dealer;” and, turning to me, he added, in a sort of half-whisper, “by Harkaway out of the Flying Dutchman’s dam; won two steeple-chases and a two-year-old stakes at the Curragh.” “Probably when he was there,” added the youngest Etonian; “and got those round legs in training.”

But Barleycorn took all this very good-humouredly; for in truth, though poor the compliment, he was what is generally termed a good-natured man. But Eton boys, devoted to field sports (as were all of the Western family—in fact it was in their very blood)—boys accustomed to ride to hounds as soon as they could cross a pony—boys who daily during the holidays, winter and summer, were accustomed to visit their father’s well-filled hunting stables, were not likely to be contented with a sight of the nags, standing half-clothed in a rough-looking stable. And Arty, doubtless to show his knowledge of

horse-flesh, requested Mr. Barleycorn to lead forth the gallant steeds, in the following easy terms: "I will tell you what, Barleycorn: produce your Harkaway colt and the grey Pope mare from this somewhat-gloomy den to the light of day, and then you shall have my practical opinion both of form and sinew. Just put a snaffle first into the mouth of the chestnut, and trot him forth under this fine chestnut-tree; I will throw my leg over him, and see if he can go."

"Go!" said Barleycorn; "he will carry your weight like a bird."

Behold the gallant steed led forth! If memory fails me not, I will describe his general appearance. Fancy a rusty chestnut, without a white hair, standing five hands three inches, rather more than less; an admirable shoulder, with good flat head, open nostril, and brilliant eye, but placed on an awkward neck; sides flat but deep, with hollow ribs; long and low in the back; good flanks, with an immense bangtail almost covering his ugly hocks; with round legs, shewing much work; the fore ones standing

somewhat apart, the toes inclining to the north and south ; take him, however, all together, he had the appearance of speed. But in truth I should have preferred to test the merits of that speed on turf or light fallow land, rather than on the road or in the heavy ; nevertheless, altogether he had the appearance of a steeple-chaser far more than a hunter—at least such hunters as stood in the Western stables. Barleycorn, however, was highly contented with his prize. So while Gussy smiled at the idea of the animal's carrying her gently, Arthur nothing daunted, asked me to give him a leg ; and, being firmly seated, looked like a monkey on an elephant. And Barleycorn, rubbing his hands, declared for all the world "that the Jumper was the picture of his sire save his head, which was the Dutchman's, all over. And he can fly too, Master Arthur ; so just give him a turn round the paddock, to shew off his paces to Miss Gussy." "Agreed." At first he tried a walk ; but the Jumper had as much idea of walking as a tailor with tight boots and corns : walking was evidently not his forte. Then

came a trot, and with it a stumble, though the ground was as smooth as a carpet; but this was the fault of the rider—so said Barleycorn—not the ‘harse.’ At last my young fraternity sat back, resolutely shook the snaffle, and away they went, though somewhat too fast, forsooth, for the size of the field; and I fully expected horse and rider would have gone over the five-foot wall which enclosed the mead from a deep lane, for he was evidently a puller of the first degree, and while the snaffle in his mouth was like a thread, the rider on his back was a feather. But that young rider had a heart, which has since faced a savage enemy at the head of a squadron of cavalry; and a hand, though only that of a boy, which was up to the trick of holding a horse far better than many which could have lifted him from the saddle, and none shews the knowledge sooner than the animal ridden; so when within a few strides of the wall he turned him along its side, and then putting him straight at a flight of hurdles, which divided the meadow land from some penned-off turnips, went over like a

swallow. Then, easing the Jumper, he came over again across the grass land at a good gallop ; and pulling him up as he approached us, threw himself from the saddle, saying, very coolly, "He will do. He can jump : that's all I care."

"Can he?" said Barleycorn, in an ecstasy ; "I should say he could as well as any 'harse' in England. What did you think of that, Miss Gussy ; like a jump, warn't it, Ma'am ? All his legs over at once—high as a turnpike gate."

"Yes," said I, "he cleared them well ; but they were only hurdles, and I can jump them."

"Hurdles !" added Barleycorn ; "indeed I'll put one on top of the other, and I warrant he clears them both."

But the winter's day was rapidly closing. Gussy, with all her love for her brothers and of sport, was getting chilled by standing ; so, thanking Mr. Barleycorn for his hospitality, we proposed returning homewards. Ere we left, however, he good-naturedly intimated his wish that one of us should shew off the Jumper at the approaching meet ; adding,

“that if the Squire saw him go, he would be soon in the Hall stables—and cheap at a hundred.” So it was agreed that Thomas the groom was to come up early on the Saturday morning and bring him down to Brooklands; leaving us to arrange which brother should have the honour of riding him. And thus, having gained our wishes, we bid Miss Arnold and Barleycorn farewell, and hastened on our way—taking Gussy between us, while Wasp led the van.

There were only two days intervening between that on which this little vaudeville was played and the one on which the much-longed-for event was to come off; and those who are ardent sportsmen can readily realise in their minds the delightful—I may say all-absorbing, anticipations of pleasure which filled our young hearts. Young! do I say; when fox-hunting is in the van? Bah!

What age, what profession, what station is free?
To sovereign beauty mankind bends the knee.

And so it is when sport is the question, more particularly the most exciting of all sports—

England's true and unrivalled pastime -- fox hunting. With a flying fox in the van, followed by a gallant pack, if a Minister of State be one of the field for the time being, the affairs of the nation are as chaff before the wind in his imagination; away and away, over hill and dale, over gate and brook, he leads or follows with the eager riders. The chieftain who has led armies to victory, cannot always lead a field of fox-hunters; but his heart beats with an excitement and enjoyment in unison with him on the lusty cob, who goes as long as he can. Men of all grades, all professions, all ages and positions, love the noble sport: it is the birthright of an Englishman. May our rural districts ever echo to sound of horn and the voice of hounds! If the truth be told, more than one bishop on the bench can ride to hounds; and, forsooth, they might, and do, commit daily far greater errors. Let him of the West pull on his long black boots—wigs are no longer worn—and hie him to the covert-side; there he would gain health, and be out of mischief; and instead of spending thousands in legal and

unchristian warfare, ruining others, and causing discord and anger and dissatisfaction to enter many a heretofore peaceful rural home, let him buckle on his spurs, buy a good horse, and join the chase; as bishops have not seldom done—in days lang syne, headed a rebel army; his conscience, as his appetite, would vastly improve. And even should the sweep of Gloucestershire be there, what then? Simply two black-coats would be added to a society where all men, if not their horses, for the time and place are equal, if they behave themselves and ride fair.

On arriving at the Hall, we found the dressing-bell had rung, and poor Gussy was somewhat tired; so we hastened to prepare for dinner, nothing loath, considering the luncheon. And a merrier party never sat down to a meal; where happiness and health, combined with appetite and love, most thoroughly reigned. A full account of the morning's ramble mightily delighted the dear old squire; as he declared, after kissing his pet Gussy, and giving her a glass of good old port to bring the roses to her cheek, which

the walk, having been somewhat too long, had faded. He then filled us each a bumper to fox-hunting, and while laughing heartily at the account of the trial of Jumper and the diplomatic manner in which we had secured a mount—which he declared could not be surpassed by Talleyrand—he added, producing a five-shilling piece, notwithstanding the remonstrances of my lady mother, who held out against the spirit of gambling, that then and there, on the bright mahogany-table on which the dessert had been placed, that we should toss the best out of three, according to agreement—tails for the Jumper, heads for Silvertail; which we forthwith did amidst shouts of laughter—the luck, as we then supposed, falling to me. And amid the shouts of us all three, it was decided that Fred Western and the Jumper were to jump together as long as they could. On going up to the drawing-room, we found that Gussy had been sent tired to bed; while the brothers received a gentle admonition that the strength of a young and delicate girl was not equal to that of an Eton boy; and so for the future,

when our rambles exceeded the limits of the park or the home-farm, she generally accompanied us mounted on a pony called Quiz—from his peculiar ugliness. But for all that, he was one of the best little animals that ever was shod. I shall pass over the next two days of those ever-to-be-remembered happy sporting holidays, though I fear not but that there are some hundreds of lads—aye, and of lasses too—feeling at this very moment that I write these lines, the day subsequent to that of merry Christmas! aye, and acting precisely as we did then. Would that I could join in their sports! may be so, I should not be the least hilarious of the party; though forsooth the Hall is now desolate, and the stable empty, where once love and laughter so truly reigned with unequalled affection, generous hospitality, and unwonted courtesy. Suffice we were up early each morning; now in the stables, discussing the merits of Silver-tail and the Jumper; now out ferreting rabbits, ranging the park, up to every fun and frolic: in which, to do her justice, when out of my mother's sight, or that of Miss

Wilson, her beloved governess, Gussy not seldom led the van. On one occasion we locked the old housekeeper out of her room; while we pillaged her jam and store of mince-meat; and on another the butler into the cellar, where, however, having a candle, he doubtless made himself comfortable. Then we shot pheasants with air-guns, by way of variation; and in order to play at poachers to perfection snared our own hares. Ah! those were merry days, a long time ago, at the old Hall at home.

It was the last night previous to the hoped-for day of sporting happiness; true we had been constantly out with the hounds on ponies. But a year in the life of two schoolboys is an age, in after-day a mere passing shadow; from the frock to the trouser, still more from the shoe to the boot; while from the back of a pony to that of a hunter is an event only to be equalled by the change of an Administration or the abdication of a Sovereign. And this event was to take place on the morrow.

We had retired once more to our sleeping

snuggeries, which were only separated by a door, which door was, of course, no separation whatever; and dire were the preparations which took place; the tops were again paraded, spurs, boots, and breeches, as trousers, inspected and laid out; for Thomas had had a thousand-and-one orders to put all things in proper form. The night was clear and starlight, rather inclined to frost: and although those whose hearts are not in the chase may smile at the apparent absurdity of these truthful details, nevertheless so are they. The window, in the course of an hour, was opened, more or less, a dozen times, and out went a head, when the following dialogue took place: "How's the night, Fred?" "Clear and starlight, but no frost, brother mine." "By George! if we find in Clover Gorse, just won't I take the shine out of Barleycorn's Jumper?" Then a little sporting talk, or compliment or two to the guests who had dined that day at the Hall. Boys will be boys! "I'll tell you what, Fred—that Jemima Walker girl, what is she?" "A weaver's or a sugar-

baker's filly, come from Bristol or Bath I believe; staying at Squire Nettleton's. Gussy says she is considered a beauty with a fortune." "A fortunate beauty! nevertheless she shows no breeding; terribly bad pasterns, wants hand rubbing, falls off in the hind-quarters, and I'll bet a shilling she has a temper like the ——. But let us have another look at the night." On this occasion Arty goes to the window. "By Jove! it's getting cold." And no wonder, inasmuch as he stood at the open window in his shirt. A cloud, however, was soon discovered rolling over the bright moon, wafted by a light south-westerly wind—satisfactory proof that, as regards the weather, all was right; and with a hearty "Good night" the light-hearted brothers were soon buried in a sound sleep, undisturbed by dreams or care, and made evident by the sonorous music of the bassoon order, which broke over the silence of the household.

CHAPTER V.

When with hack and Havannah each danger defying,
In cover I rattle in hopes of a run,
Fast flit my cares ; as the summer dews, flying,
Vanish away from the face of the sun.
There the hunt are all met, for the country is famous ;
The wind's in the south, and the scent pretty good.
" Come, Philip, now give us a gallop to tame us !"
" We will if we can, Sir." " Yoiks, into the wood !"
Not a skirter amongst them—but crash they fly into it.
That's Vanity speaking ! " Yoiks ! Vanity, hark ;
Stand steady, for Reynard will break in a minute !
Tallyho ! there a halloo—he's off for the park."

HAIL the daybreak on that happy morning !
Daybreak indeed ! for the winter's

sun had scarce brightened the eastern skies, ere once more the windows were again thrown aside ; and joyful were our exclamations at the state of the weather. A broken and cheerful sky, just fanned by a mild south-westerly breeze, which was fast dispersing a slight fog that still hung on the rushing trout-stream which ran meandering through the park—all gave reason to believe it a thorough good hunting, and what is far more to the purpose a good scenting day.

“A southerly wind and a cloudy sky proclaim a hunting morning. Tallyho ! Yoiks forward !” I exclaimed. “I wonder whether Thomas has gone to Barleycorn’s for the Jumper,” added Arty. “By the Pope ! just won’t I stir up old Silvertail ? that’s all.” “Take care, my boy, he does not deposit you on your tail ; he is a rare horse at stiff timber, so says dad.” “Well, if we come to old Nettleton’s park-paling, I’ll show off his paces.” And with similar jokes we proceeded to disturb the whole house. In fact, we were already dressed and descended ere Molly, the under housemaid, had

commenced the dustification of the drawing-room ; or Mr. Hind, the butler, had taken his first matutinal snooze, or half slept away the effect of the previous night's grogation. Nevertheless, we walked forth in high glee ; first towards the stables. There we found the lads hard at work, hissing away like steam engines, and strapping with thumps the ribs of poor Silvertail with sufficient force to inflict bruises black and blue on any one's side but that of a horse. Mr. Bradly, my father's—governor's, I should say, though I dislike the term—master of the horse, a true lover of quadrupeds, but by no means a good judge of horses, as fresh and clean as if he had been shaved and dressed by steam, his thick shoes well polished, his gaiters fitting his somewhat slim legs to perfection, while his knees being made for breeches—which all men's are not—with his hands thrust in the pockets of his well made, cut off, dark green coat, stood watching the proceedings of the stable duty—a true disciple of his calling. As we entered, he was addressing a lad who was

adjusting the clothing of Gussy's mare ; who, if I might judge from the appearance of her coat, which was as sleek as though it were July instead of December, had well done his duty ; and clipping—a most convenient, but not the less an unnatural habit—had not then come into general fashion. “I'll tell you what, my lad ; if Miss Gussy Brilliant isn't turned out better nor any horse in the field to-day, I'll just welt you for your dinner, that's all ; so look sharp, and then bear a hand on Corbeau. You know the squire won't throw his leg over a horse that turns a hair after a twenty minutes' burst ; so put your whole heart in your elbows, do you hear?” “Yes, sir.” “Well, then, mind what I says, that's all ; for I am a man to my word.” So he was, truly, when the correction of stable-boys was concerned. And, to do him but justice, he was an admirable superintendent of a stud ; so far, that if he did little himself, he took care that others should do it for him, while he received the praise. At the moment he was holding forth we entered ; when Arty exclaimed : “Hallo ! Bradly,

what's the matter? Anything amiss with Silvertail? Has Thomas gone to Peacock Farm for the Jumper, eh?" To the last question he replied first, perhaps wisely. "Yes, sir; Thomas started half-an-hour since on Punch, so that he might lead him down fresh." "That's all right." "And there's nothing the matter with old Silvertail." "He is as fresh as a two-year-old, and he'll carry you like a pigeon." "Then what's in the wind?" "Why, sir, I was just giving the lad George a bit of paternal advice in stable ways. You see, sir, birds that can sing, and won't sing, must be made to sing, on the right or the wrong side of their mouth. The lad's a new one, sir, since you were last at home, and wants correcting at times, particular about Christmas. He can beat all the parish at pitch-and-toss; and as for cracking a walnut, eating a pudding when he can get it, now squabbling, and now kissing on the kitchen-maids, there is not his equal in all Gloucestershire. And pon my word," he added, turning to me, "I verily believe he sucks the Bantam eggs your lady mother—her ladyship I mean—is so par-

tickely fond of for breakfast.” “The deuce he does!” I added; “then I wish you would welt him, as you say, till he lays them again.” “I just will, sir, in future; for there’s not a bit of truth in his whole body.” “At all events,” I added, not wishing to be too hard upon the lad, “if the grooming of Brilliant is his handiwork he deserves absolution for a week; so give it him; you can do that in defiance of the Pope. And now tell me, Bradly, what do you think of the weather? Will the scent lie in the vale?” “Scent, sir, scent? it’s a question for filosofers; be assured, sportsmen know nothing whatever about it, and never will. It’s a question, sir, unanswerable. Pitch on a good scenting day, and then take out the hounds and have a run, and send the man that pitched on it to London to exhibit as a conjuror. I’ll tell you what, Master Frederick—I knows the scent of a beef-steak and inions from a beef steak and chalots, though I prefer the former; but as for telling you whether the weather being mild or cold, wet or frosty, is good for scent, is beyond me, sir. Here, you lad George,

quick ! get the basket, run ! How often have I told you to be handy, and see that the horses don't foul their beds ? Now, sir, all the ventilation in the world won't keep a stable healthy if these matters are not attended to, and it's impossible to be standing here all day." As well we might, we quitted the stable, after this harangue, with shouts of laughter, telling Bradly that if we had such a burst with the hounds as he had given us as regards scent, we should be heartily satisfied.

As I now, after the lapse of long years, sit writing in my snuggerly, small, it is true, but snug and old-bachelor like, the sides adorned with books and trophies of the chase, with my friend Western's notes of his early life before me, I confess on this, the 22nd night of January, 1851, I find myself occasionally rising from my easy chair, and pushing on one side the curtains, and unbarring the shutters, to look forth and see—as did he in those merry days—what says the night for the hunting of to-morrow ; and although I find that the stars shine brightly, and the wind is due north—the apparent forerunner

of a frost, which has been so long absent from "merrie England," I am nothing downcast in my hopes of sport ; for I have long been of Mr. Bradly's opinion that scent is scent—as regards beef-steaks and onions ; but as regards foxes, a question which even "filosophers" have never been able to decide on. In confirmation of my assertion, permit me for a moment to come to a check in Fred Western's career, while I place before my readers a few truisms as regards hunting. On the night, or rather on the afternoon, of 20th December, 1850, not a month since, I ordered my gallant grey The Doctor, by The Colonel out of Flare-up, to be prepared to join the Duke of Gloucestershire's hounds at a meet called Yatton Kennel. The day previous had been frosty, rather severely so, nevertheless towards the afternoon it gave, and I decided to send the nag to covert. As I was dressing for dinner, however, being engaged to dine with a friend in the immediate neighbourhood, I beheld cloud after cloud disappearing ; and when I walked through the park it was a clear, sharp, bitter frost. Among the company

assembled there was a young lad who had just come home from Eton, who caused me to think of days lang syne ; for he had a pony, which pony was bound for the meet, in company with The Doctor ; and three times during that evening, after the ladies had left us to our claret and the Pope—who, without any scent, we run without a single check to earth, in a deep old stone pit—three times, I say, did he run round the house, and, for aught I know, across the park, to see how looked the night, which way blew the wind, and each time returned with a longer face, to inform the assembled party, among whom there were several sportsmen, that “ hunting we could not go ” on the morrow ; but he was wrong. On leaving the house about eleven P. M., I stood without the door to light my cigar, and I can answer for my nose and fingers being well nigh frozen ; the ground was as hard as iron, the sky brilliant and clear ; and the moment I reached home I countermanded the gallant grey, and in my mind made other arrangements, which I ought in courtesy to assert were as pleasant

as fox-hunting. And so were they ; yet not precisely so exciting, as the lady with whom I proposed a long Christmas walk was not "my ladye love."

When I rose the next morning the brilliant sky had vanished ; no sun shone o'er the woodlands on which my chamber-window looked : it was a dense, dark, undeniable, unmistakeable, hard, black frost. No sooner dressed than I walked into the garden, placed my foot on a flower-bed which lay due south, and protected—it was as hard as iron. As for hunting, I felt it was as much out of the question as riding a race through the Burlington Arcade. I therefore sat down quietly to breakfast, and having demolished at least a pound of Oxford brawn, came to the conclusion that the hounds could not hunt—nor I, nor any one else—at all events till the Monday following, if then, it being then Saturday. And with this feeling I read the "Daily News," without envying Cardinal Wiseman or President Napoleon ; and then proceeded, with a book and a cigar, to the greenhouse, not wishing to see the stable on such a day.

About the hour of twelve—yes, it was quite twelve—a friend called in, almost breathless, to say that the frost was giving, and that a sportsman had ridden towards the meet. “Madness !” I replied, “mere nonsense. The hounds will not go ; and if they do, it will be merely to walk back again.” Nevertheless, I went again into the garden, and true enough it was thawing, but so slightly that I mentally decided “a-hunting we could (not) go.” This matter being settled, I wrote my letters, and as the clock struck two I sallied forth with my fair companion to take the promised walk. As we passed through the village it was evident a thaw had commenced ; as we advanced towards the higher ground, however, it was as hard as a rock ; and when crossing the fields I affirm that it would have been utterly impossible for a horse to have galloped ; and as for fencing, it was utterly impracticable. As each half hour passed, however, the thaw became more rapid ; in fact, it was the most rapid thaw I ever recollect ; so much so, that ere the short day closed, as we returned home to dinner, the brooks were swollen to their

banks, and the roads were ankle-deep in mud. I consoled myself, nevertheless, with the reflection that at two P. M. hunting was out of the question; and if the hounds had even left their kennel at that hour, with ten miles to travel to the meet, they could scarcely have been thrown into covert before three or after, with scarcely an hour's daylight before them. For all that, I was mistaken, and lost, as did most of the members of the hunt, one of the best runs of the season; in fact, so utterly flabbergasted was I on being told the following day that they had met at two o'clock, found a fox, and had a splendid run, that I determined, frost or snow, sunshine or thaw, never to be thrown out again with a meet so near at hand. A Sunday I have mentioned intervened between this memorable day and that of the hounds meeting at Bowood, the seat of the Marquis of Lansdowne, which was also within nine miles of my then domicile; and the gallant grey having had so long a refresher, I determined to start early, and jog quietly to the battle-field. But fate again ordained otherwise. The Sabbath morning

broke clear and frosty, and as I walked to church the earth had again become hard as adamant. True, the sun's power moistened it about mid-day, but then in the shade it was like paving-stones: and as soon as the glorious rays had sunk behind the western woodlands, the stars shone forth brilliantly, the moon was clear and full; in fact, it was a second edition, revised, of Jack Frost. "It's all up with hunting for the next fortnight, and no mistake," I said to a friend, as we took a brisk turn or two previous to attacking a juicy sirloin, for I have not as yet come to cold mutton on Sundays, in order that my cook may cover her peccadilloes by saying she goes to evening church, when she well knows she attends tea and scandal at Mrs. Culpepper's, or, what is worse, makes love to the gardener in the hothouse. Moreover, I came to the conclusion more readily, inasmuch as I had received a letter that morning, which ran thus:—

"DEAR LINTON,—The Vale swarms with long beaks. We have a merry party in the house, and Popsy is dying to see you. We shall expect you by the express train. I will

send the minibus to meet you at the station. No excuse. If you pass through —, just take in tow a couple of kegs of natives; they are scarce in this neighbourhood of milk and honey.

“Yours ever,

“E. SEATON.”

Fox-hunting! the first of all sports! what then? it freezes—like Russia. Cock shooting vastly agreeable! What, then, should it thaw? Popsy and a snug party, sparkling eyes, blazing fires, fast friends, good cheer, and this in the land of milk and honey! How sweet the thought! And two barrels of natives; speaking forcibly of a little cosy Christmas supper and small talk, half-an-hour before midnight; friends around the hearth—arrangements for sport on the morrow. I pull the bell. Enter Hezekiah—a strange name for a servant, but a true one.

“Hezekiah.”

“Sir.”

“Be up betimes. Should the weather break, prepare The Doctor for the chase, and call me immediately. Should it still freeze, let the hack be in the dog-cart by ten, and

prepare yourself to attend me. I shall go to the West for a week or ten days. Take boots and breeches."

"Yes, Sir."

[Exit Hezekiah.

About eight A.M. on the following morning I was awakened from pleasing dreams of Popsy and Christmas festivities by a knock at my chamber door; and with awakening senses came awaking thoughts.

"Well, Hezekiah, what weather?"

"Its more bitterer than ever, Sir. The cistern is frozen an inch thick."

"Bitterer than ever. Well, then, I'll go: hunting is over till after Christmas, that's certain. Bring my warm water."

Shaving and breakfast over, I started; the whole way to the railway station the ground was frozen hard. I travelled fifty miles westward, and all day it appeared to me to be freezing; the pools were sheeted ice, and under the hedges and woodlands the white frost lingered. Arrived at my friend's house, in a very sheltered warm situation, it appeared to give a little there: yet it froze on again ere nightfall. Indeed, I find, on referring to my journal, that from the 20th

December to the 24th, with the exception of some few intervening hours of thaw, it froze—in fact, almost the only frost that season. What was my astonishment, then, to receive a letter a few days subsequently, stating that, notwithstanding the weather, the hounds had met at Bowood, and had a run—nothing, it is true, to make me regret my absence—still, they had a run. “By St. Hubert!” I exclaimed, on reading the letter at the breakfast-table, with so loud a voice that Popsy poured the tea into a plate of woodcock pie, which I had just prepared for consumption instead of into my cup. “By St. Hubert! there’s a reformation in hunting as times advance, as in all other things—the Church to boot. Skates will henceforth become things unknown, since no frost can shut the kennel-door.” In fact, I could scarcely believe that which I had heard, so I took pen and paper, and wrote to that most obliging and most admirable huntsman, Mr. Long, whose voice has so long cheered the gallant pack of Beaufort to death and victory; and as in his case, like master so like man, he returned me the following

graphic, but most obliging answer to my queries, which I feel assured he will not object to my giving verbatim here.

"Badminton, Jan. 10th, 1851.

"SIR,—I will endeavour to give you as fair an account of the two days' sport you enquire about as I can.

"The day we met at Yatton Kennel (Saturday, the 21st) will be admitted by men of sporting 'notoriety,' as a good one; but that at Bowood was, in my humble opinion, not worthy of particular notice. After meeting at Yatton Kennel we threw off at Stanton Park, but in consequence of the severe frost, our field of sportsmen was limited; in fact, only one blue coat, or member of the hunt, was present. The hounds on being thrown into Stanton Park found immediately, ran two short rings, and then raced for Stack Wood, Hullavington, Clapcot, Leigh de la Meer. Here the fox hung for a minute or two, but as soon as he heard my voice he left his kennel, and went away with the hounds on his line for Kingston St. Michael's; then turning to the left, he ran parallel with Kington Langley, right through Draycot Park, Segary Woods, leaving Segary House on the right, down to the Meadows, with Broad Summerford and Dauntsy Mansion on the left, continuing the line of meadows to near Dauntsy Wharf, where it became so dark I stopped the hounds, who otherwise would have tasted blood, for the varmint was well nigh beat.

Owing to the hard frost the hounds were not thrown into covert till near three o'clock.

"The day at Bowood did not afford much sport ; the scent was indifferent, the fox ran short, and sportsmen were scarce. I only saw two blue coats in the field. But we were honoured with the presence of the Marquis of Lansdowne and Lord Palmerston. The frost was so severe that Lord Shelburne had left for Bath, thinking it was impossible to hunt. Our chase was through Whetan and Wans to the large coverts of Bowood, where the varmint went to ground.

"Hoping this little account will suffice, I shall be happy to give you any more information in my power.

"I am Sir, your obedient Servant,

"WILLIAM LONG."

Long may you still live, say I, to cheer your merry pack to victory. And so much for scent, even with a frost on the ground ; for I am told it was freezing hard both of these two days. And now I must return to the Western lads, and tell of their doings in the field.

CHAPTER VI.

THE merry young sportsmen returned to the house, not however till they had been gratified by the safe arrival of the Jumper, who, led by Thomas, was placed in a stall, perfectly fresh and fit to go; by which time things were looking more cheerful. A bright fire blazed on the dining-room hearth; breakfast was prepared, the sideboard groaning with good substantial cheer; and even the somewhat flamingo-faced butler had contrived—knowing the Squire's peculiarity, or, I should rather say, punctuality on hunting mornings—to rouse himself from a most

agreeable nap, and honour the lower dominions with his portly presence. In fact, as far as I can recollect, he was decidedly the most substantial, if not the most important, person of the Hall or neighbourhood—*et pourquoi non ?* Excuse a French term, for he was certainly most **useful** in his special department ; **added** to which, he brewed, **without exception**, the best ale I ever **tasted** : **and** if-so-be it precisely suited his own palate—what then ? all the country round pronounced it undeniable. Stogumber beer was, or rather is, mere wish-wash in comparison, though vastly agreeable ; and White's Taunton ale alone could bear it any comparison. His name was Mr. Hind—not an inappropriate one—and few had the audacity to drop the Mr., of which distinction he was very tenacious himself. Notwithstanding, he had many good qualities ; one of the best in my eyes, his extreme care and attention on all occasions to my mother and Gussy, in the latter of whom he took a positive pride : add to this, he was an ad-

mirable tempered servant. As we entered the breakfast-room Arty seized the poker and gave a good stir to the already blazing fire, while I threw myself into an easy arm chair to rest my legs; for, as I said before, the boots were a trifle tight about the calves, and I longed to find myself mounted. At the moment, therefore, I did not observe the broad back of him I have been naming, who stood—having seen to the proper arrangement of the sideboard—looking out of the window into the park. He soon turned towards us, however, and with a beaming face declared that, in his idea, we were turned out to perfection; and he doubted not but one or the other of us would bring home the brush. “But recollect, Master Fred,” he added, “if you are going to ride that brute of Barleycorn’s, beware; for I heard say below he was about the most rampaginous puller with a pack of hounds before him as ever came into the country. He will scarcely feel your weight on his back; and if you are not careful, be assured

you may go out on his back, but you will come home on a hurdle, that's all ; for Thomas says he's got a mouth like a rhinoceros, and a jaw-bone like that of Samson's ass. Now we brewed this year a brew which has quite outbrewed all : the Squire tasted it : and decided that a hogshead should be kept till your brother comes of age, and I wish you to be in at the death of that as well as the fox. So pray, sir, be careful ; for I know that you and Master Arty are audacious spirits on horseback. But here comes Miss Gussy, looking for all the world like ' Dinah ;'* so I'll just send up the urn, and inform master that breakfast is on table."

"Do so ; for time flies—*tempus fugit*, as we classics say. Well, Gussy ! you do look splenda-c-i-o-u-s ! No, no ; that's not the word for you—simple and charming. By Jove ! a new habit. Who suffered ; eh ?"

"Suffered, Fred ? what do you mean ?"

"Why, suffered !—paid for it—or is to

* Doubtless he meant Diana.



C. W. HORLOR



pay—or wont be paid—yet expects, and ought to be paid. That's what we mean by suffering for a habit, or a coat, or a pair of tops, or what-not; but in your case all's right, doubtless—you're not an Etonian, but mammy's Popsy darling! So turn round. Capital colour—dark and lady-like, and plain and well made. There, pet; you look the thing!"

"Have done, Fred! do go along with those rude tricks."

"Well, your habit is really perfection, though you pronounce my tricks bad ones. So, who gave it you? and who made it for you? 'Pon my life, if you were a year or two older, you and Brilliant would set the field agog!"

"Nonsense. Aunt Mary gave it me; and you well know how particular she is as regards all I wear; and I believe it was made by the celebrated 'Moses.'"


"Oh, ay! Aaron to Moses, with something about noses." But this young sweet girl certainly did look like a sylph that fair

hunting morning ; her slight, almost childish figure was well set off by her beautifully made riding habit, which, as she held it up to pass across the room, displayed the most perfect little feet—not disfigured, as is the fashion of the day, in horrid vulgar boots, tipped with glazed leather, as worn by all the hair-dressers' daughters in the land, believing it to be the "fashion," odious word—but in a good, proper, well-fitting pair of double-soled boots, or what are termed clump-soled, so that she could put her foot on the ground, even in a fallow field, without fear of being laid up with influenza for a fortnight after returning home. Moreover, the horrid disfigurement of flaps, or curtains, or stern-sheets, to ladies' habits, had not then been discovered, for the benefit of tailors and clothiers, to the utter destruction of a graceful figure: and nice plain hats were still worn, instead of the horrid deformities with rosettes—not that a graceful Spanish hat would not be a great improvement, with a flowing plume. In fact, a plain black "wide-awake"—barring

the name—with a drooping feather, is by no means ungraceful. But Gussy sat down, and pushed aside her flowing golden curls as the dear old dad entered, looking the very beau ideal of an English gentleman and a sportsman. He kissed his darling daughter, and saluted his boys, adding, "Well, lads! the day's fair and mild: if we find a fox in Stanton Gorse, I fancy the first in the field must be well mounted and know how to ride. I shall take Thomas; for I am quite up to a gallop myself. So recollect, Gussy, when we find, you will ride quietly home: your mother's wishes are imperative on this head."

- "And they shall be obeyed, dear dad; but I long to see the starting of the Jumper, as the boys term him, and Silvertail."

No sooner was breakfast over than the horses came round. Brilliant, a dark brown horse, beautifully marked, of considerable power and admirable condition, as temperate as his action was perfect, with his beautiful head erect, and full well-placed tail, stepped proudly forth as if conscious of the precious



burden, light as a feather, he was about to carry. But the Squire was not of the order of sportsmen to permit his daughter to ride a bang tailed weed, though boasting the blood of Eclipse; and having assisted her to mount, he patted the neck of the noble animal, giving Bradly, who held the rein, much praise for his admirable condition. "Yes, sir, I like the horses in my establishment to have coats like Satan" (meaning, doubtless, "satin"). "And great the trouble and labour I have to get them so." "Yes," added Arty, on one side, "the trouble of welting, as you term it, the unfortunate stable lads." The squire was soon safe on Corbeau, one of the most noble black hunters I ever beheld, and they rode away side by side. It would have been difficult, even throughout the length and breadth of merrie England to have witnessed two more perfect animals of their kind, or two more appropriate riders. Then came Silvertail, on whose back my laughter-loving brother soon popped, getting one of the lads to give him a leg. And then to shew my knowledge of


horse-flesh, having run my hand from the knee to pastern of the Jumper, and found his legs, as are those of ninety out of a hundred of all English horses, as round as a rolling-pin, I did the same. The moment I had placed my feet in the stirrups, however, he lashed out most furiously; but Bradly cried out, "It's only his spirit, sir—the horse is fresh." Nothing daunted, we trotted after the leading file, followed by Thomas.

It was a happy joyous ride to covert on that fair morning even of Christmas time, and the very birds appeared to join in our merriment as they carolled forth the last notes of the year ere their little throats, like the springs, were frozen up by the rigours of winter. As we approached the appointed place of meeting, the squire drew in Corbeau, who had been jogging along somewhat briskly, in order to give Gussy a canter, and said, "Now, boys, recollect, no larking—no jumping to show off your pluck—no riding before the hounds have found, or over them. I don't ask you to follow your father, though

I know the country well ; and he must be well mounted who can pound old Corbeau. Wait till the hounds have settled well on their fox, and then go as straight as may be, and catch them if you can. No shirking bye-lanes, no jumping stiff gates, with a light fence on each side. Spare your nags when you can ; but if there is no way for it but a brook or stiff timber, then face it like men. A horse is a good judge, far better than people imagine as to whether his rider has or has not his heart in the right place. So now forward, Gus, for I see the hounds coming over the common."

Gentlemen sportsmen and sporting gentlemen of merrie England, I greet you. Put on your leathers, top-boots, and spurs, white, well polished, and bright as may be ; the coats belonging to your several hunts, if you do so belong to hunts—if not, the gallant scarlet, or, as may be, your dark Oxford grey ; on your heads well-brushed hats ; on your hands well-fitting and well-washed buckskin gloves. For the nonce, leave at home your chains and your studs, and your out-

landish shaped hunting caps, like the head-piece of the Sikh commander ; doubtless very appropriate to prevent the burning suns of India from penetrating warriors' pates, and by no means inappropriate for huntsmen and whips, if only to distinguish them from the field, far more so to guard them from the branches of trees, they having continually to enter dense coverts. Leave also your waistcoats, with innumerable pockets, and your unsightly-looking knee-cords ; in fact, all those modern innovations of dress which make men look like mountebanks instead of sportsmen. For my part, though perhaps I am wrong, I see no men who look so much like sportsmen and gentlemen as do the members of the Beaufort Hunt, and there are among them men who are mounted as well, and can ride side by side in any county with any hounds in England. Their costume is top-boots and leathers, a blue coat lined with buff, buckskin gloves, and a hat. What does a gentleman require more ? The blue coats are distinguished in the field among the red, and generally speaking in the van. Eccen-



tricity of costume, caps, cords, chains, and twenty-pocketed waistcoats, will not suffice to carry men over brooks, gates, and walls. So, for this day, leave them at home, and join the Westerns at the meet.

On a fine open knoll or common land, looking south-west, behold the assembled pack, and a field of more than one hundred horsemen, I was about to say—but no, it was the Christmas holidays, and many ponies had gathered there also, some of which, with their young riders, greatly distinguished themselves, and, if I fail not in memory, there were several asses also. Behind this knoll ran a somewhat long belt of fir trees—protecting, as it were, the hill side from the keen north and north-easterly blasts; while in front, some two or three hundred yards from the spot where the hounds were placed, a large thick covert of gorse covered the whole side of the slope. It generally held two or three foxes, and was reckoned a sure find. On this gorse the sun shone brightly, and in fact it was a well chosen snug retreat for master reynard, the more so as imme-

diately below it a rich luxuriant vale extended for mile on mile towards the Severn, dotted over with numerous farm houses, to whose poultry yards and pigeon houses they paid alternately their devoirs. On the left, also, about three miles distant, stood the handsome residence of Lord Delamere, a millionaire and a game preserver of the common order; for all that, he was rather a friend than an enemy to fox hunters, for no doubt the varmint found the flavour of his pheasants vastly agreeable, and his rabbits were abundant; whether his keepers attended to his instructions or not, imperative orders were given not to destroy foxes, and one was generally found in his coverts. So much for the battle field, as far as it goes; now for the army, and then the charge. The Earl rode up to our party on a good powerful bay hunter, one of his own stamp, and there are few better, and thus accosted us — “How are you, Western? and Miss Gussy? Charmed to see you in the hunting field! ’Pon my word Corbeau and Brilliant look as well as their riders. And the boys home from Eton?




Glad to see you, lads! But, halloa! Fred, where did you pick up that piece of blood? It's not the Brookland stamp, I fancy."

"No, no," said the governor, "no horse of mine. Farmer Barleycorn very kindly lent the nag for Fred to try him, though I fancy he is not precisely fitted to join my stud. However, we shall see if he can go, for I imagine you intend to give us a run."

"And if you do, my Lud," chimed in Barleycorn, who came forward, "and Master Fred lets un go, there's not a harse in the field can beat him." "Ah, Barleycorn!" added the Earl, "glad to see you in the field, and with such a good stud. You must be doing well, notwithstanding the times; and your looks by no means belie my words."


"Why, thank'ee, my Lud, we do manage to jog on; and if corn is low, horses' feed is low also." "Well, I always like to see the yeomen of England in the hunting field. So now, gentlemen," he added, taking out his watch, "time's up, and we shall soon see if the gorse holds a fox." Then, turning to Gussy, he pointed out, about two miles dis-

tant below us, a winding brook which crossed the vale, and recommended her to ride quietly up and down the line of plantation. "If the fox breaks across the vale, you will see the best of the run, dear lady; at all events none of the mishaps at the brook, and there will be many, will escape you. Probably, Master Fred, or Arty, may number among the unlucky; for Jumper, as he terms that huge-legged chesnut, in my opinion is a questionable brook jumper. If we break to the east, towards Delamere Woods, then ride to the east end of the covert, and tell Thomas to skirt the hills, and you may possibly see the end of it." "Papa insists on my not following the hounds," replied Gussy. "Not necessary to follow them if you do as I tell you. Never mind papa in the hunting field; he is as keen as his own boys. So, good-bye, Gussy—your horse is perfection. Now then, Phillips, yoiks into the gorse." Phillips touched his cap, and rode forward with the gallant pack at his heels, their coats actually shining in the morning sun, and their condition admirable; and in two minutes every



hound, at the sound of his voice, dashed into the gorse like a charge of cavalry. Now turn for a moment, and contemplate the field, recollecting the period was a few days before Christmas. All the boys in England were at home for the holidays, save those poor fellows who had no homes to go home to; all the boys in England, with few exceptions, are fond of fox-hunting. Therefore, might be seen many lads on various ponies, good, bad, and indifferent. Then, be it recollected, that it was a season when all the clerks of counting-houses and all sorts of houses, and others, become insuperably idle, and desire to have what is termed a spree; and they fancy that galloping a poor hired hackney over two or three fields, and then tumbling off in the mud, is hunting; and after catching their horse, and riding home again, they relate their exploits to Anna Maria, the milliner or shop girl with plastered hair *à la* Madonna, and glazed shoes, whom they assure, on the following Sunday afternoon, that they rode over six gates and two brooks side by side with the Duke or his Lordship,

and that their 'ors was an out-and-outer; and the poor girl turns her eyes up, and after admiring his fashionable tie, believes, as rightly she should, that he is a hero. Then there are two or three sporting doctors, who go the first twenty minutes like birds, and coming to a brief check, within hail of a patient, take advantage of that check to feel his pulse, and charge him an extra five shillings for coming so far to see him, to say nothing of medicine promised to be sent. Well, I, for one, grudge them not their trifle of sport or their earnings, which are ill paid and hardly laboured for. Some of them, if well mounted, manage to do this little bit of professional, and then hit off the hounds again before the finish, if so be it has not been a teaser. And then come the red coats, and the cords, and the caps, and the yeomen stout and bold, and many well mounted, and the red coats with leathers and hats; and the parsons, generally speaking, men who, having ridden a "steeple-chase," can ride in a fast run; and lastly the flower of the hunt, with a few stranger




officers on leave or from neighbouring quarters, with a sprinkling of blue coats from the Duke of Gloucestershire's. In fact, the field that gathered for the chase on that fair morning numbered well nigh two hundred. Recollect, also, the meet was within reach of one large city, even for men who rode hacks which they called hunters, and sufficiently near to another for men who rode hacks to covert, and then exchanged them for hunters. How they all fared at the end of that memorable day it would be in vain for me to attempt to describe, or how they went in the run, for I saw them not. My memory reverts solely to my father on Corbeau, Barleycorn, who was no flincher in the field, and who, moreover, was most anxious to witness the prowess of Arty on Silvertail and myself on the Jumper, and I watched them keenly as far as possible throughout the run, and even years afterwards recollect every incident of the chase, so far as they were concerned; so shall I give it here.

CHAPTER VII.

THE RUN.


GIRTHS were tightened, for many were there who would have tightened them even were they already in the last hole, solely that other persons did so, and they heard it was a sporting custom; others cast away the ends of their cigars, while a few lit fresh ones out of bravado—but then they came to smoke probably cabbage leaves, not to ride to hounds. But hark to the melodious voice of Violet, a beautiful mottled bitch; Violet, one of the pride of a pack then, as now, one of the first, if not the first, in



England, tells a joyous tale. "Hark to Violet!" echoed again and again the full voice of the huntsman, who, standing up in his stirrups, eagerly cheered on his pets. But their leader's voice was scarcely wanting with such a pack as that; Violet's note was enough. The whole pack were on the scent like lightning; in one instant the gorse was alive with quivering stems and melodious voices; in two minutes more a large dog-fox emerged from the valley side, faced deliberately the whole field with a look of contempt, then turning, laid himself out, was over the first fence in a jiffy, and straight through the centre of that glorious vale direct towards the brook. Readers, oblige me by recollecting that at that period I was a boy fifteen years and a few months old; enthusiastically fond of hunting; mad about hounds; a boy that had never seen a pack of hounds before, save on a pony; never such a scene as that; and mounted on a horse that I had been told was a first-rate hunter.


On the right of my sister Gussy sat my dear old father quietly on his horse, yet

watching with a face bright from enthusiasm and delight the working of the hounds; a short distance beyond was the noble Earl, the master of the pack—but they neither uttered a word; while on his left I was controlling the Jumper, who was giving proofs of his not being “as gentle as a lamb.” Behind us were Arty and Barleycorn, with many others well mounted. The moment, however, Violet spoke, dad turned to Gussy, and said, “Now, dear, let Thomas guide you towards the plantations before this heterogeneous crowd make a charge, which they will in two minutes. Here, Thomas, take care of Miss Gussy.” At that moment the whole pack had joined the hound which spoke; and I literally felt a choking sensation rise in my throat, not from fear, but extreme excitement—an excitement which those who can read the human face would have said existed in many an older breast than mine. The Earl took out his watch, again replaced it, buttoned his coat closer, and, turning to my father, said, “Violet, you know, never tells lies. The scent appears




to be good. If he breaks away towards the vale, your boys will have their wishes gratified." At this moment every voice in the field appeared to be joined in one wild halloo. Every hound rushed from the gorse, while the Earl, pushing down his hat, went off at a gallop. I can, in these after days, only compare the whole scene to the last charge of Waterloo; and the Earl pushing his hat on, as the Duke pushing in his telescope, and exclaiming, "Up, guards, and at them!" a tear of positive excitement ran down my face, as clearing the first fence in his stride, the Jumper carried me in the front rank of that tremendous rush. The first four or five fields were all grass, and of some extent, with light fences, and the greater portion of the field, even the men on hacks and the ponies, appeared to go along. On my right I saw my father on Corbeau, taking every thing coolly; on my left Arty was sailing away on Silvertail, who knew his business; and close by his side rode Barleycorn, in the full enjoyment of the chase. The hounds were racing mute with a burning scent, and

the Jumper, with my light weight on his back, pulling my arms off. Nevertheless, he was evidently a fast horse, and took all in his stride; in fact, I almost led the field. As we came to the sixth enclosure, however, a large stubble, my dad came up to me, saying, "Now, then, Fred, a wall's before us; so keep your horse well together. Do not be in a hurry, and we shall shake off the crowd." True enough; there was a wall, at least four and a half feet high, built of loose stones, and no time to select an easy place. It was the first I had ever encountered; but my spirit was up, and at it we went. Corbeau cleared it as a matter of course, and over went the Jumper after him, without touching a stone. "Bravo, Fred!" exclaimed the Squire—"Bravo, boy!" My heart beat with pride, and I turned to the left and beheld Barleycorn in the air, with uplifted whip, which, coming on the flank of the Jumper, sent him flying into the next field some yards. Silvertail cleared it also splendidly. And, true enough, the throng already began to diminish. Here and there a blue



and a red coat cleared it cleverly, while others awaited till a foot or two had been knocked off the top, while many refusing it altogether, looked out for a lane or a road, and never saw a hound for the remainder of the day. Here we turned a little to the left, over some slight fences, when I heard some of the leading men say, "By Jove! he has skirted the brook, and is making head for the Delamere Coverts." But, no—luckily, no. Every hound is across the water, and, with increasing pace, gaining on their prey. We cross a ditch and a bank. Corbeau clears an awkward stile standing. Barley-corn comes up as I take a pull at the Jumper, and says, "Well done, Master Fred, I told you he was a rare 'harse.' Put him straight at the brook, and, bedad, you'll beat the field." One hundred yards below us, we were then going three parts speed, the winding stream appeared, the water of which was swollen from recent rains, and from bank to bank, in some parts rotten, it was at least eighteen feet. Here my dad, who was a trifle in advance, took no notice of any one,

but, going straight at it, cleared it in a bound, and followed the hounds, as if determined not to save us from drowning. Must I own that my heart beat quick? But I had not the slightest intention of turning; indeed, had I so wished, it was impracticable; for, true to the words of the butler, I might as well have pulled at a rhinoceros—go he would; so I touched him with the spur to increase the velocity of the pace. Whether this offended him or not, who can say? Three persons—I fancy they were the huntsman, my dad, and a red coat—had already landed safely, so at it I went; but, alas! the Jumper failed me. The moment he came to the water's edge, he stopped short, and well nigh precipitated me over his head into the rushing waters. Fancy my mortification at this moment, when I beheld Silvertail fly it like a bird, with my younger fraternity grinning on his back; indeed, I fancy he literally put his finger to his nose as, without halting for an instant, he followed in the wake of Corbeau. I had, however, one slight consolation—Barleycorn, who had stuck to



Rackham, on his right. The time was already five-and-twenty minutes ; the pack gaining ground every field. "He's away straight for Upcot," said a heavy man, on a splendid horse ; "and, if so, few will see the end, at this pace." Thence we passed near the little hamlet of Blagdon, and beheld the rector and his daughters standing on their well-kept lawn, in evident fear that we should ride over their flower-beds ; and on, through a small outlying covert belonging to Brooklands. Here he hung for a minute, but, disdaining the large coverts beyond, still held his course direct for the Upcot earths. "By Jove !" said Phillips, cheering on his hounds, "he can never get so far, at this pace."

Down a slight declivity we raced, Silvertail and Corbeau still going as if they could go for ever—such was the condition of the Western stud in those truly happy days—while Barleycorn, somewhat splashed, like myself, with a beaming face joined us ; the Jumper still pulling—in fact, the veins of my arms were almost bursting. At this

moment we approached a fence, which I have ever considered the worst of all others to encounter with hounds running fast, still more so to one riding such a pull-devil. It was a blind, awkward bank and hedge, leading into a deep, muddy, ruddy cart-lane, with an equally blind fence on the other side, or, for choice, a stiff gate. Corbeau and Silvertail dropped into this, as a matter of course—one with his light weight, the other with his heavy—and popped out of it again, over the opposite one. Immediately before me there was a gentleman who had been one of the leaders of the field throughout the day. He halted for an instant; and, in my boyish ardour, I fancied he did not like it; but the hounds were only two fields ahead, and hold my horse I could not; so I bawled out, “Go along, Sir, or let me go.” “Wait a second, young gentleman,” he replied, “without you wish me to jump on one of the finest hounds in the pack;” and then, horse and all, he disappeared into the lane. It was, indeed, an awkward fence; but the Jumper would have it, and forward, like a steam-engine,

he rushed, with such impetus, that it literally carried him half over the lane, to the next fence, where he stumbled, and pitched on his head, sending me well-nigh on his ears ; but I luckily recovered my seat in time to see Barleycorn also cross safely into the lane, but on turning sharply—probably to take the gate—his horse tripped and fell ; and I left him floundering in the mud. As I galloped along the next field, I saw a horse running loose, and a man running after him—the most absurd of all things, to behold a man in top-boots, in a ploughed field trying to catch a horse. . “Stop him !” he cried—“stop him !” but I was trying to catch a pack of hounds running into their sinking fox—it was scarcely to be supposed I could stop to catch his horse ; most men are selfish at such moments. Onward we sped. The gentleman who had kindly showed me the way out of the brook, and a light man with moustaches, were leading ; then came the huntsman and one of the whips, a blue-coat and two red, a parson, Silvertail, Corbeau, a neighbouring miller, and your humble ser-

vant. The field, in fact, was reduced to a dozen, who were still going well. The Earl, on a second horse, was not even in the front rank. The last shot of the gallant fox was nearly fired. Nearer and nearer we approached the Upcot coverts. More enthusiastically Phillips cheered his gallant pack; indeed, I fancied he would have thrown himself from his horse to catch the fox himself, so fearful was he that he would escape. But no — his doom was sealed. "Forward, forward!" screeched the huntsman. "Yonder he creeps, dead beat, up the side of that hedgerow. We have him. Forward, beauties! there is still a mile to Upcot." And he cleared a strong fence, cheering on his hounds. While staring for the fox, I took no thought of the ground over which I was riding; and the Jumper, putting his foot into a grip, came down heavily in a turnip-field, and gave me an awkward roll. I held on, however, manfully by the bridle, and we were soon both up and on again; and from that day to this I have not ceased to blame the Jumper that I did not see the first

hound lay hold of that gallant fox. As it was, there were only seven men in at the death before the Jumper; and Phillips just held the varmint aloft as I entered the field.

There stood Corbeau, and my beloved dad with his arm on his neck, the gallant animal looking as if he had only done his duty, and was prepared to do it again, while the face of that best of men beamed with delight, as he first looked at Arty, who still sat on Silvertail, whose silver tail scarce wagged, and then, as I came up, taking my hand, he said, "Bravo, my gallant boy! few would have seen such a run as this on such a horse." At this moment, Barleycorn and a blue-coat also joined us. "By dad, Sir, that's what I call foxhunting!" he exclaimed; while Phillips, pulling out his watch, added, "Just fifty-two minutes without a check, from find to kill, with Low Bottom Brook in the bargain."

"The best run of the season," exclaimed the Earl, delighted with the performance of his hounds. "Here, Fred Western, you

shall have the brush for your ducking. Never lad rode better. Give Arty the Jumper next time."

"I'll wager a stack of beans to a crown, my lord, Master Fred clears the brook on Jumper, any day, without his spurs."

All the field laughed, in which Barleycorn good-humouredly joined. "And now, gentlemen," said the master of the pack, "are you satisfied? or shall we try for another fox?"

In truth, few of us were so; but the horses said "Enough," and the meet on the Monday was a good one, so "Home!" was the order. The hounds jogged on with Phillips at their head, for a mile on our line to Brooklands. Here, bidding "Good-day" to the Earl, we trotted homewards, with a half promise from our Dad that we should attend the meet on Monday.

CHAPTER VIII.

ON approaching the Old Hall—the home of youth's happy days, the spot for ever engraven on the heart in memory of other times, when the cares of life—such as they were—passed as an April shower, leaving not a cloud lingering on the horizon, we were welcomed by the merry voice of the laughter-loving Gussy, who, having removed her hat and habit, now all radiant in health and smiles from her morning's ride, and its exciting amusements, rushed out on the steps of the entrance to meet us.

“I saw you, brother mine,” she exclaimed,

addressing me, "floundering in the brook, with the Jumper and Farmer Barleycorn."

"Did you?" I replied, in no good humour; "and what then, most precious Popsy? Did Mademoiselle Wilson tell you no other eyes could see so far as thine; no brain imagine aught of wonders like those which fill your little head; no mouth, utter such truisms?"

"No; but I thought you would be drowned, you ill-tempered boy, and I begged Thomas to ride with me to your help."

"You did, did you, Miss Precious? and what said Thomas?"

"Why, he said he should not wonder; but it was to be hoped, in such case, that Barleycorn would be drowned with you, for lending you such an animal—adding that he could not disobey orders, whatever the consequence, and Papa had 'desired I should not follow the hounds. The chase is the chase, do you see, Miss? Many a good man gets half-drowned at times: some break their legs; some their arms; but they generally recover to hunt again! It is exciting, as you see, Miss. What is, is to be. There

goes Squire Oatfield, into a muddy ditch, and Captain Slapbang smashing a gate, do you see, Miss?"

"Good advice and true, Gussy, my darling! Thomas is a filosefer, as Bradly terms it: but if you saw me half-drowned, you saw me get out of the brook again; and if your little eyes can see half so far as the dear Wilson would desire us to believe, why you would have seen to the end of the run. Here is the brush! as proud a trophy as a French eagle."

"Well, Sir Impudence, I am glad you have brought home something in memory of this pleasant day. But how was it that you obtained it, instead of Arty? for he cleared the brook at the same time as papa on Corbeau, and was away before you?"

"Why, you little simpleton! The first horse that starts does not always win the race. Add this—the lad that

Mounts Barleycorn's Jumper, and gets to the end of a chase,

Must have a bold heart, light hand, and firm seat, to ride him whatever the pace."


And thus good humouredly joking in the full enjoyment of the past, and hoping for the future, we entered the house.

Then came the Sabbath—a day religiously kept at the Old Hall; but as unlike the Sabbaths of the present day in the country, or anywhere else that I know of, as are persons and things from the olden time: and while, after the lapse of years, I write these pages from my lamented friend's early memoranda—I who voted for the Reform Bill — I that have gloried in free-trade, inasmuch that my heart has ever told me that the gifts of the Almighty ought freely to be exchanged from one end of the world to the other: and more, that I would desire to see the million live rather than the thousand luxuriate — confess that, while many things are changed for the better, the reform most of all required, in the hearts of our teachers, has rather merged into a spiritual warfare, terminating in a paradox of religious controversy, maddening to some, and a senseless impossibility to others. In the days when I was young, and knew little

of the cares of life, save the want of a mount on hunting days, and a fair wind on fishing days, the prelate of Exeter was not, and Rome remained at Rome. So, forsooth, the admirable Christian pastor of Brooklands preached his simple sermon twice on each returning Sunday—once more than then was usual in rural districts—and was listened to and loved by a large and respectable congregation. He did more—he gave a third of his income among the poor of his extensive parish, without ostentation or a hope of thanks : he sought his reward from Him who never deceives. “Fear God and love your neighbour as yourself,” was the lesson he taught, and much more—but this is not the place to dwell on it. He abused neither Pope nor Mahometan ; he quarrelled neither with Independent nor Wesleyan ; but he practised what he preached, and in the end gained a victory with his sword still in the scabbard, and with words dictated from the heart. Such was the man from whose lips I first heard the Gospel preached. Regularly as the Sabbath morning arrived, no

sooner breakfast over than, if the weather was wet, the old coach came to the door; and into it we bundled—not, however, till Gussy had received various instructions from the *chère* Wilson, at which—for boys will be boys—we made our remarks, and had our laughter. “Gussy, my love, wrap your shawl closer around you; the air is keen”—or I should rather say, cloak, as it might have been—“darling! I hope you have thick boots on; the ground is damp”—and so forth. At which commands, one brother proposed a stove should be placed at the bottom of the coach; while the other suggested the cushions should be aired with a warming-pan, our Dad all the time hugging his Popsy closer, and attempting to be serious; but, nevertheless, in all heart entering into our frolic.


At the church, Mr. Western always met with truthful and hearty respect; we behaved, as who would not, who listened to our excellent pastor? for truly was he not a preacher of the present era—all theatrical mystification, mis-termed Evangelicism—but



a Christian, large-hearted charitable man, who spoke by word of mouth precisely that which he performed in every-day life—a man abounding in benevolence, who acted towards others as he desired they should act towards him, and loved his neighbour as himself. What then? there was not a man in all the country round who could cast a fly as he could. There had not in earlier days been one who could beat him in a fast run, however stiff the country. He had renounced fishing, not, as he once truly observed, that he saw aught objectionable—far less sinful—in so simple and rural an amusement; but there were others in his parish—absurd as it might be—who did so, or at least fancied that he to whom they listened from the pulpit each Sabbath should not be seen walking along the flower-bedecked meads, granted to man by God, with a fishing-rod in hand. So, in deference to them, he renounced the sport in which he delighted, and all the tackle and flies of this best of fishermen were one day sent down to the Old Hall at home, as a present to us boys.

On our good father remonstrating as to his giving way to such absurd wishes from a few old village maidens, he thus calmly replied —

“My dear Mr. Western, it is not for me to argue the right or wrong of such trifles. There are some, doubtless, who, knowing me, would judge me not harshly that, rod in hand, I passed an hour in the evening by your streamlet’s side. There are others, who would not think at all about the matter. While the few imagine the duties of a clergyman are merely those of writing a sermon six days a week in high-flown popular language, and preaching it in a theatrical tone on the seventh. The first-named I love and respect, as they, knowing and rightly judging, respect me; the second scarcely less; the third it is my duty to endeavour to join to the first and second. What then if I give up a trifling amusement, and am so great a gainer? ’Tis the same as regards hunting: I am an enthusiastic sportsman. You have seen me ride to hounds! All I thought of was the excitement of the chase,



the air, and exercise—the glorious pastime under the canopy of God's heaven in this fine country. And I always returned home with a heart yearning in good-will towards my fellowmen, and happy in myself."

"But as regards the fishing," said the Squire; "surely none can find fault with you, that having laboured in your parish all the morning, you pass your evenings in company with Izaak Walton!"

"No, my dear sir, the practice is as innocent as is the recreation charming: it is the example of idleness, if you will, that forms alone the sin—if sin there be. Moreover, if there be one among my twelve hundred parishioners who objects, better to give way to his objections than have one enemy."

So spoke this good Parson, the best of Christians, and most amiable of men, subsequently our well-beloved tutor, I have named him here simply as an actor on the theatre of our earlier days, inasmuch as I speak of the youthful inmates of the Old Hall at home.

It was on a dull December evening of the Sabbath following the day of our merry

hunting party, that having sent home Gussy, and her well-beloved *gouvernante* in the family-coach after afternoon church, the weather being dry, bright, and cold, our kind-hearted Father persuaded Mr. Barton, the rector, to walk home and dine with us at the Hall. As we awaited his joining us without the church-yard wall, a young sporting farmer, to whom we were well known, a tenant on the Western property, approached us; and beckoning Arty on one side, exclaimed—

“Does Master Fred know the Duke of Gloucestershire’s hounds be to meet at Allington Gos on Thursday?”

“At Allington Gorse—no,” said I, “Ploughshare, where is it? How far? Good meet? Were you out yesterday?—such a run, enough to make your hair stand on end!”

“There’s a go, sir!” he replied; “out yesterday!—not know where Allington Gos is! Sure I was, and I seed you both going like greyhounds; and I went too, sure-a-ly, till we got over the brook: but somehow or

another, my grey mare Harry Longlegs—a bad 'un to beat most times, and first-rate timber-jumper—managed, as things will be on occasions, to hit a low stile hard with her fore-legs, and at the same time I hit my head hard in the next ploughed field. Sure-a-ly, my hair did stand on end! I thought my neck were a-broke; but I recovered, and here I am, all right and tight for Allington Gos! Not know it!—one of the duke's best meets, a matter of sixteen miles only from the Hall: so pray come, young gentlemen—and have a go."


"Won't we? that's all, Ploughshare! so good afternoon."

And we ran after the Squire and the Rector, who had walked briskly towards the Hall.

"Well, boys!" exclaimed the former, as we came up, out of breath, "what says young Farmer Ploughshare? Was corn up or down at yesterday's market? Has he a colt to sell? or a match for the Jumper to lend you—eh, Fred?" seizing me by the ear.

“Neither, dad; but he says the duke’s hounds meet at Allington Gorse on Thursday; and Long is never in such pluck as when he sees Squire Western mounted on Corbeau, and his boys at the covert-side!”

This, as may be readily supposed, produced a burst of laughter, in which his Reverence joined with much good will; and although the subject dropped as we now approached the Hall, the ice was broken, and we took advantage of his presence, after the well-hung and tender sirloin had been fully discussed, and the woodcock which followed pronounced excellent, and washed down by a bottle of claret, such as with reason we can say is rarely met with in these days, save that the price is now as the flavour somewhat lower than of old. All hearts warmed and appetites satisfied, the ladies retired, my father placed himself in a comfortable arm-chair by the fire, and saw Mr. Barton fairly ensconced in the other, leaving us lads to pass the wine; so that, after some conversation in reference to poor-rates and parish affairs, Susan Bradley’s engagement



with the young squire of Brandfield, and the capture of a notorious poacher at Arlington, Allington Gorse became again the subject of discussion.

"Arlington," said Fred, "is that near Allington?"

"No, my boy," replied Mr. Barton, "quite in another direction."

"How then do you reach the latter from hence?" said Arty.

"Why, forsooth," added his Reverence, "I should say Wickham, Badminton, Upper Coombe, then by Alton kennel, taking the high road for Chippendale. But Ploughshare doubtless knows it well: trust to him: the meet is a good one. I wish I could join you there."

"And why not?" said the Squire. "What's the sin in riding across the country on a fine fresh morning of Christmas-time? Come, Barton, I will mount you—more, I will give you absolution!"

"No, no, it must not be! I have given up the chase: do not tempt me. But these lads are right ready for the fray, so give

them another joyous day, and they shall bring me a faithful account of the sport on their return."

"Well!" said the kind old Squire, "this is indulgence indeed; however, we shall see, Barton—we shall see! The distance is long, and the days at their shortest, and my stable is short of horses: still, I should like to see the Duke and the hounds again: there is not a more courteous gentleman or a better pack in this country—in fact, I know no more pleasant pack to hunt with in all England. So good-night! Barton, good-night! I wish you would mount the pepper-and-salt cut-away, and show us the way. And now, boys, to bed—it's getting late!"

CHAPTER IX.


"I'm stagnated!" said Arty, as we mounted to our sleeping apartments: and with this he stood on his head in the centre of the room, and cried "Tally-ho!" Which of my readers can do the same? I assisted him to alight on his feet again, and we then held a cabinet-council as to our chance of attending the meet at Allington.

"When I arose this morning," said Arty, with one leg out of his trowsers, the other in—"when I arose this morning," he continued with a droll tone of voice, "it was not my good fortune to be acquainted with a spot called Allington; but Ploughshare—

thanks to the good yeoman — enlightened me ; and you, dear Fred, on the very correct principle of sharing good fortune with your friends, informed our well-beloved parent that the hounds would meet there on Thursday next, with the intention of finding, chasing, and, if so be they can, killing a fox. Be assured, we shall be there to witness the transaction, as commercial gentlemen have it, for the wind is blowing in the right quarter.”

“True, *jeune amis !*” replied I, who had just commenced French, “you are right, and no mistake ! the wind evidently blew in the direction of his Grace’s hunt this night, and the admirable Barton put up the helm before it direct for the Gorse ; but to-morrow we must make sail, and clench the bargain — so *bon soir, jeune frère*, as John Crapeau says ; recollect we are going into G. to-morrow, to see the fat beef and fat mutton preparing for the *gastronomies* of gormandizing Christmas festivities.”

A fine sight, truly, is it for a lover of agricultural produce—or I should possibly



more correctly denominate it the effects of agricultural produce, such as mangel-wurzel, swedes, oilcake, and all the possible delicacies provided for the brute creation to increase its natural proportions to an unnatural state of obesity at this jovial season of the year; or, at least, which was a jovial season of the year as I recollect it at the Old Hall at home, when roaring fires and rounds of beef, misletoe, and merry faces were as plentiful as holly-berries. In fact, fat beef and fat farmers' faces might be seen in abundance, and the one not dissimilar to the other in colour; as may be now, though they are unprotected: and forsooth, bullocks have of late years become fatter and fatter, till little else but fat remains; indeed, the reduction in the value of agricultural produce has made little reduction in their physical dimensions. As usual, on our arrival at G. on this, the Saturday before Christmas, we beheld the luxuries supplied for man's consumption; for every imaginable species of poultry was exhibited, as well as butcher's meat. We also beheld every imaginabl-

species of human nature ; and never shall I forget what in school-boy phraseology is termed the fun we had. First came Barley-corn, extolling the beef and abusing the times, as is still the fashion, and ever will be ; praising his gallant steed, pulling up his smart neck-handkerchief, and pulling down his still smarter waistcoat, and ogling and winking at the lasses, as if his fat, round, red, good-humoured face, which shone like a harvest-moon, was undeniable. In fact, good man ! he fancied himself a lady-killer—a very pink of perfection among the “gals,” as he termed even his betters. As we approached the cattle-market, that Mr. Western might cast his eye over the short-horned and straight-backed, and fat pigs—or I should rather call them “burstern”—he observed Barleycorn feeling, with considerable gusto and apparent knowledge of the art, the ribs of a wonderful animal—at least, he would have been wonderful if nature had so made it, and not oilcake, mangel-wurzel, and so forth. However, there he stood punching, and poking, and admiring ; and if the me-

mory of earlier days does not deceive me at this length of time, the bullock and the admirer did equal justice to their feeding. The lusty agriculturist turned from the bullock to the hogs as we came towards him, and after saluting us with a hearty "Good-morrow, gentlemen!" held forth on their bestial merits with an admiration that was positively astounding.

"Look here, Master Fred!" he exclaimed, "here's a beast! what lines! what buttocks! 'pon my conscience, he just his a hanimal!"

"A hanimal," said Arty, "truly a fat beast—doubtless most admirable beef! But how gets on the famous horse, Jumper? Are you bound, Mr. Barleycorn, once more for the chase? Do you know—have you heard—been told—or read of the fact, that the Duke of Gloucestershire's hounds meet at that celebrated covert Allington on Thursday next?"

"At Allington Goz!" replied Barleycorn. "Bedad! it's a long way from Peacock Farm: for all that, I should like to have a day with the Duc."

“And why not, Mister Barleycorn?” said a sharp voice, while a sharp hand was laid somewhat heavily on his shoulder—“and why not, Mister Barly? are you not the owner of the best horse in the county—the celebrated Jumper?”

“Maybe, Mister Hoofcut;” replied Barleycorn, “but I would thank you not to strike so hard. I have a good horse, but, as I was saying to these young gentlemen, the distance is great from Peacock Farm.”

“What then?” said Hoofcut, who was a character well-known throughout the county, “a man who is fond of hunting, has the best jumping horse in all England, as you say you have, with means and physical stamina far superior to that fat corpulent specimen of unnatural agricultural experimentalizing, should never fail to meet with such hounds as his Grace can boast of within twenty miles. I’ll be bound these young gentlemen will be there as well as myself on Woltigeur, as my lad calls him!”

“Bedad! then I’ll go!” said Barleycorn, turning to admire a lump of lard, with a

hairy back and two small half-open eyes, which he termed a pig. I may here observe, that such like demonstrations of future bacon are as plentiful as crows at all the agricultural meetings in Old England.

Now I have already observed that Hoofcut was a character; and a character truly was ~~he~~ ^{he}, though eccentric withal: and yet a kinder heart—a more gentle nature—or a more forgiving and charitable spirit, were never combined in human being, more than were they in Mr. Thomas Hoofcut, Veterinary Surgeon, of the ancient city we were then visiting—a man known to all the country round, not only for his thorough and practical knowledge of the art by which he gained his daily bread, which I am rejoiced to recollect was rather in proportion to the quartern loaf than the penny roll, for his skill was real and effective, his practice honest and upright; his love of animals a sort of *furor*, and his kindly feelings towards his fellow creatures, more particularly, as regards children, most sublime. What was the consequence? his practice was as extensive

as remunerative ; his kind acts as abundant as widely dispensed. For all that, he was what the world calls a character—indeed, have I not in one sense already said enough to prove that he was ? for, alas ! how few do we find in any position with so many merits and so few faults ! Therefore I may say he stood almost alone—not that ~~he~~ did stand much, for I scarcely ever recollect seeing him more than twice out of the saddle. I have spoken of this respected veterinary surgeon, long long ago defunct, inasmuch as his eccentricities, both as to dress and manner, were quite in keeping with his warm and charitable heart, and admirable conduct ; moreover, he was a good rider, and a first-rate sportsman. Let me endeavour to picture a slight man with broad shoulders, an aquiline nose, a high forehead, and sparkling eyes, standing about five feet seven in his boots, with legs in a trifling degree concave, from his constant equestrian practice : place on this person a low-brimmed hat, a dark brown well-brushed broad-flapped cutaway coat, with waistcoat to match, light kersey-

mere breeches, and well-cleaned and well-made boots, with bright spurs and mahogany, though not dirty, tops. Take off his coat and waistcoat, and you would have pronounced him a jockey; deprive him of breeches and boots, a quaker. His knowledge of horses as animals was first-rate; his knowledge of their physical ailments seldom equalled—indeed, both as regards horses, dogs, cattle, and even pigs, his opinion was sought; many and many a farmer had to thank him for saving valuable stock, as did he alike save the bacon of many a poor cottager, and that without remuneration. I have said his love of animals was a strong passion; much more so that towards his daughter, his only child and his idol; and although many may imagine that little romance can attach itself to the life or the death of a veterinary surgeon's daughter, yet was her beauty such, and her whole character so far beyond her position, as her death was sudden and painful and so connected with sporting, that I must briefly name her hereafter. Notwithstanding the

lapse of years, never can I forget my boyish admiration of her, seated on her clever horse, Sefton, which she so called from its having once belonged to the father of the present noble earl—as good a sportsman, and as admirable a gentleman, to say nothing of the noble attached to it, as ever rode to hounds. But of the daughter anon: I must say a few words more of the father. I fancy him even now standing in the stable-yard at the Old Hall, a horse paraded for inspection, the boy George, already named, at his head; Mr. Bradly, with hands in his coat-pocket; Dr. Hoofcut, ditto in his breeches' pockets.

“There’s a horse, Doctor! landed from Ireland last week—something of the right stamp, eh?—a true colt of Wall-topper’s, out of Flowers-de-Lis’s! There’s lines! there’s a back! there’s shoulders! The Squire gave a hundred-and-fifty—cheap at the money! He’s a rare horse, I’ll be bound in a heavy country!”


“Heugh!” said the Doctor, taking his hands from his pockets, and poking the horse all-over with his fore-finger as if he

were killing flies, and then running his hands down his legs, and looking well into his eyes; while Bradly was abusing the lad for not holding him quiet, notwithstanding the poking. He said, "Take the harse in, as you term him, lad—take him in, and take care of him ! The Squire knows a horse and his value. He is worth £250, or my name is not Hoofcut !"

And he was right : indeed, Mr. Western afterwards refused three hundred. His detestation of pulling horses almost equalled his love for his daughter—and not without reason, as I shall shew—a fact well known to those who know life, and witnessed it. The tale ran as follows.

A horse was one day brought for his professional approval as to its soundness, and after having fully examined it, he was requested to mount. He did so ; when just at the moment that he found himself in the saddle, ere his feet were in the stirrups, the hounds at full cry dashed across a field close at hand. The horse pricked up his ears and started racing pace. Hoofcut was not only

a good rider, but possessed an admirable hand ; but the brute he was about to pronounce sound in wind and limb had not previously permitted him to discover that he was an inveterate puller, with a mouth like iron. On raced the hounds ; on galloped Hoofcut—like Johnny Gilpin—over hedge and ditch. All he could do was to steer clear of the pack, and keep his seat ; his broad and low-crowned hat pushed down on his head. He sat back firmly and pulled, now easing off a point, now pulling hard. But what availed it ? To hear him describe the chase, and express his anger against all the pulling horses in the world, and the black beast, Satan, as he termed this one in particular, was a positive treat. The whole hunt were astonished—as well they might be—for by many, if not all of the leading riders, he was recognised ; and although generally well up with hounds, he by no means attempted, however well mounted, to shew the way—in some measure, possibly, from deference to most of the members of the hunt, by all of whom he was respected,



as from the habit of not being what is termed a bruiser. At length—strange as it may appear, but yet a truth—the hounds close to their fox, with a burning scent, entered what I should term an open covert—that is, a wood of oaks and beech trees, with little holding. Through this they raced, and Hoofcut unwillingly after them, till at length, and at the very moment they were running into their fox in the adjoining field, while in vain he endeavoured to hold his iron-mouthed horse, he found himself literally transfixed, horse and rider, between two wide-spreading branches of an aged oak that crossed his path. Here he stuck fast, totally unable to extricate himself, while the whole field—at least, such of them as had lived through a fast run, and were up to witness the death of a gallant fox—passed him in review; too intent, however, on the termination of so first-rate a chase, to do more as they galloped past than shout at poor Hoofcut, who struggled in vain for some time to deliver himself from his perilous position, till at length crash went the branch

beneath the horse's weight, when steed and rider bit the dust.

"Be d—d for the greatest brute man ever threw his leg across!" said the quaint veterinary, rising from the muddy earth on which he had rolled. "Be d—d for the most audacious puller, in all the country round! and do you, Barleycorn," he added, pulling his broad-brim hat tighter on his head, "buy him as a first-rate match for the Jumper!"

In truth, though eccentric in character as in dress, he was an admirable veterinary surgeon, and a most kind-hearted and charitable man. All the little boys and all the little girls of many a rural Gloucestershire village were ever ready to welcome Hoofcut, as Hoofcut was ever ready to bestow some kind words, or, what they deemed far better, some lollypops from his capacious pockets, on all the little girls and all the little boys. His remains rest beneath a stone in the churchyard of—; and while many a tale is told by the elder ones of what manner of man he was while living, there were few who

respected his memory, or appreciated his character and professional talent more than did the inmates of the Old Hall at home.

"Talking of hunting, Master Fred," said Hoofcut, "I fear me the hounds will not meet for a week or two to come, either in the Earl's or His Grace's country. Duck-shooting, I fancy, will be the best sport!"

"And why so?"

"Simply that the wind is shifting northwards, and a northerly wind and Christmas generally means frost, or snow, or both. However, I may be wrong, young gentlemen, and I trust I may, if your hearts are bent on the chase. What say you, Barley-corn?"

"Why, maybe it will freyze, and maybe it won't. If so be it does, there won't be no hunting, that's fact! but a week's hard weather, with some snow, will do a world of good to the land—and it has been so open hitherto. A rest will do the horses good also. But there be plenty of ducks, and no want of sport in the Brookland coverts—

with good skating on the lake, if so be it sets in strong. So what God sends man must be thankful for, if so be he can't go hunting!"

Well done, Barleycorn! I was not aware you were so great a philosopher. Indeed, every season has its pleasures and beauties peculiar to itself: even winter, however cheerless to some, fulfils also in this respect the benevolent designs of the Creator. What can be more agreeable than to see a hoary frost encircling the tops of the trees, and all nature, as it were, clothed in a dazzling mantle of snow? Were there no winter, neither spring, summer, nor autumn would display such a variety of beauties; 'tis during the severity of winter, of all the tuneful tribes—

"The Redbreast sole
Confides itself to man."

Nothing marks more distinctly the approach of each season than the feathered songsters. Early in the spring, larks congregate and fly to the stubble for shelter;

the sparrow begins to sing; the wren also
pipes her perennial lay,

“ While yet the wheaten blade,
Scarce shows above the new fall’n shower of snow.”


The skylark’s note in short excursion
warbles; jackdaws repair to the tops of
churches; and the grey-and-white wagtail
appears; snipes, woodcocks, herons, wild-
ducks, and other water-fowls retire from the
frozen marshes, to streams still open.

“ The fowler now steals upon the spot with cautious step,
And peering out, surveys the restless flood;
No objects meet his eye—
But hark! what sound is that approaching near?
Down close! the wild ducks come, and darting down,
Then up on many side the troubled wave—
Then gaily swim around with idle play:
He views their movements; while his well-taught dogs
Like lifeless statues crouch. Now is the time!
Closer they join; nor will the growing light
Admit of more delay. With fiery burst,
The unexpected death invades the flock!
Trembling they lie, and beat the plashing pool,
While those remoter from the fatal charge

Of the swift shot, mount up on vig'rous wing,
And wake the sleeping echoes as they fly,
Quick on the floating spoil the spaniels rush,
And drag them to the shore."

All seasons, all weathers, which God in his goodness has granted to man, have their charms and their enjoyments. To him who has a light heart, and a crown in his purse, feeling no hatred in his heart, and surrounded by the chosen of his affections, what more joyous than the winter season? To a sportsman and a lover of the country, it is possibly the choice period of the year—his mornings passed in hunting and shooting, he returns with health invigorated, and spirits exhilarated from the pleasures of the chase and exercise, to the cheerful home-circle, the blazing fire, the curtains closed, the apartment well-lighted and "comfortable"—to use the best of English terms—to enjoy female society, books, and music. Ah! 'tis a pleasant season, that of winter; though gladsome is the flowery Midsummer, and so ever was it at the Old Hall at home!

True to the opinion of Hoofcut, ere the




moon had well risen the ground was already hardened by the commencement of an intense black frost—so intense, indeed, that day by day the earth appeared the more and more as if bound in iron; the lakes were frozen over thick and strong; and skating, as wild-duck shooting, took the place of hunting; while friendly hospitality was dispensed with kind and generous plenty at the Hall to all the country round. Among the many who were wont to visit there, was one whose beaming face and amiable disposition I shall ever recollect with pleasurable feelings, though I was but a boy when he was ever welcomed at my home, though now long years have elapsed since his remains have been laid in the churchyard. At the period to which I more particularly allude, he might be fairly termed a country gentleman, of good family and sufficient means for all the conveniences—indeed, luxuries—of life. In manner he was kind and courteous to all; a just and active magistrate in summer; a thorough-going foxhunter in winter. No meet, however distant, whatever the weather, but there

he was if the hounds were there, mounted on a powerful horse; his fair, but handsome, cheerful face beaming with kindness and joviality.

“How now, boys?” he was wont to say, as we met after church—almost the only time in the hunting season we ever saw him, save at the dinner-table, or during a frost—“How now, boys? are you not for the meet to-morrow? Come over, lads, to Partridge Court, and dine with me!”

And then with equal kindness and generosity he would give us a tip when the holidays were over. But like many other men of his kindly nature, neglectful of business, and distrusting no one, he never could understand that a rent-roll of twelve hundred per annum was not sufficient to keep up a stable of twelve hunters, for not one of which he had given less than a hundred guineas, and to feast as to lend to his so-termed friends on all sides. So, rents being ill-paid, he had occasional recourse to a loan; and all the world knows that loans mean lawyers—and heaven help the man that requires their help! for he will soon become helpless. And such




was at last the fate of poor —— ! A first-rate rider, and as pleasant companion as ever sat before a well-provided board. The following lines, from the witty pen of Hood, precisely describe him as to his career :—

“ What with keeping a hunting-box,
Following fox,
Friends in flocks,
Burgundies, hocks,
From London Docks,
Stultz’s frocks,
Manton and Nocks’
Barrels and locks,
Shooting blue-rocks,
Trainers and jocks,
Buskins and socks,
Pugilistic knocks,
And fighting cocks,
If he found himself short in funds and stocks,
These rhymes will furnish the reason !”

Such was the man : such were his virtues : such his errors. There have been many more such, and will be again.


While the frost lasts—and, to be truthful, it was a “stunner”—to use a “stunning” vulgar expression—permit me to speak of another well-known character, who has only

very recently resigned the chase, and with it a life—as far as his sporting passion was concerned—that is marked with pedestrian and other feats of a most extraordinary nature. Many a half-crown has slipped from my pocket into his in sheer admiration of energy, activity, and all-enthraling love for what is generally denominated sport; while, mounted on a tolerable nag, I have vainly endeavoured to beat him. This enthusiastic and truly admirable practical sporting biped was known throughout the Earl's hunt by the cognomen of Jim Hastings. If so be it was truly that given to him by his god-papa, I cannot vouch. I generally termed him "Jim," poor fellow, as he generally replied "Master Fred;" the "Master," as the "Fred," remaining much to my satisfaction from the day I first rode Barleycorn's Jumper, till that of my being gazetted as a captain of Light Dragoons—and may it evermore till the hour of death by word, as doubtless it did in recollection, had not the stalls of the Old Hall at home ceased to be tenanted by the hunters of Squire Western.



Now the well-known James Hastings—better known to the members and frequenters of the hunt as Jim the Jumper—was the descendant of highly respectable parents, his grandfather having not only claimed the peerage of Huntingdon, but he actually had himself expended the whole of his means on the prosecution of that claim. His father also was a person of considerable education and ability ; and as an amateur actor of some celebrity, performed *Sir Peter Teazle* on the Cheltenham boards, frequently giving amateur theatricals at his own house. Jim Jumper, the subject of my early sporting admiration, was originally brought up—wonderful to relate !—as a tailor. No offence, ye most necessary and hard-working, and oftentimes ill-paid, members of society ! But truth will out—and I must admit, what all the sporting reading world will admit, that it is astonishing, but not the less a fact, that this the ninth part of a man could perform such herculean pedestrian tasks as those I am about to relate :—

It was, if I err not, some thirty-six or



forty years lang syne that Lord F——, then Colonel B——, brought his hunting establishment to Cheltenham, that Jim was first seized with a positive *furore-de-chasse*; and one of his first feats in this line was to get up an amateur hunt of his own, which thus took place:—The meet was in the main street of Cheltenham; the pack, consisting of Jim's favourite terrier, and such other puny terriers, curs, or what-not, who were out for a bit of pastime; the game, a red herring attached to the wheel of the "High-flyer," a celebrated fast London coach. As the hour for its starting sounded on the church-clock, coachy mounted, and away they went. A few minutes being allowed—in due sporting style—the terrier leader of the heterogeneous pack was laid on the scent, and away they went, soon followed down the High-street by nearly every cur in the town—

"Both mongrel, puppy, whelp, and hound,
And curs of low degree."

This extraordinary pack chased down the



High-street, and along the Gloucester-road in full cry, continuing the pursuit as far as the "Pheasant"—a small roadside inn—where, the horses being frightened by the variety of canine notes, and the shouts of the followers, bolted, and upset the coach into the ditch. This was poor Jim's first hunting adventure, but by no means his last.

From that day he steadily attached himself to the Earl's hounds, attending all their meets on foot, both in the Cheltenham and Berkeley countries. Some of his feats, arising out of his intense passion for the chase, must have been all-engrossing and almost incredible: nevertheless, there are many who will corroborate the facts I name. To walk from Cheltenham to Berkeley—twenty-five miles—from thence to the meet; to follow the hounds all day, be in at the death, and return to Cheltenham home the same night, was a common occurrence. Another of his feats was still more remarkable:—The meet being at Broadway, sixteen miles from Cheltenham, he was up betimes in the morning;


walked from Cheltenham there; thence to the covert-side, eight miles; ran with the hounds all day; and was in at the death at Fairford, twelve miles; back to Broadway, twenty miles; and thence to Cheltenham, sixteen. But as if this was not sufficient to quench his indomitable ardour and physical power, he joined a badger-hunting party the same evening at Queen and West Woods, at least twelve miles more, making the distance accomplished between sunrise and sunset actually eighty-four miles! What think you of this, ye turtle-feeding gentlemen, who live at home at ease, and fancy that six turns on a dry terrace, in woollen hose and thick shoes and clogs, is exercise sufficiently fatiguing to secure appetite, digestion, and a snore after dinner! Indeed, his enduring powers were such as almost to stagger belief—so much so, indeed, that he was frequently mentioned in *Bell's Life* as the “Flying Tailor.” Numerous were the mounts kindly offered to him by members of the hunt and others, but invariably declined, inasmuch as he declared that riding was to

him far more fatiguing than walking and running. During the runs his services were great—far more than possible to say. Was there a gate to be opened, Jim was at the very spot; then shooting a-head he was not seldom in at the death before the best men in the field. With stick in hand, and hand in pocket, he could top the highest fence; and his opinion in reference to scent, and not less as regards the recovery of a lost fox; the admirable tact with which he would recommend a cast; and, in fact, his general knowledge of the chase was extraordinary. If ever a man was born a sportsman, it was poor James Hastings; and as such he died. The last "Tally-ho!" the last cheer to the pack running into their dying fox, has sounded in his ears. He is himself run to earth by the grim Destroyer: he has been in at the last death—his own! And honour be to the noble master of the hounds it was so long his delight to follow! He has generously provided the means for his respectable and decent funeral.

He has unhappily left a mother, aged

ninety, in indigent circumstances ; but doubtless the same kind protector will not allow her to want. In the days of her prosperity she acted the part of *Lady Teazle*, for the benefit of the local charities. May the local charitable now act the part of *Lady Bountiful* towards her. Sportsmen are generally kind, liberal, and feeling ; and humble though the hero of our tale was, he has left behind him many who will regret his absence at the covert-side when, the summer passed, its glories and delights give place once more to the sound of the huntsman's horn, and the chorus of the chase.

Another anecdote connected with this famous hunt, I shall give here as it was told me ; but the teller was a truthful man, and a clever one to boot ; it may be, therefore, that I may lose something in its repetition ; however, tis a simple matter, and the more simply told the better. On being applied to for a couple or two of hounds in aid of a pack which a good man was about to form to chase the varmints in a neighbouring county, their noble owner forthwith acquiesced, and



sent accordingly with kind greetings, among others a dog of high breeding, a very pet among the pets, which dog I shall here name Know-the-way. Well, the hounds were sent, arrived, were acknowledged, and so forth ; time passed, Know-the-way was almost forgotten ; how could it be otherwise ? the kennel contained eighty-four couple ; and where all, or nearly all were good, one, even though of the best could be spared. One morning, however, when the pack were in the Cheltenham country, and about shortly to return to that of Berkeley, the feeder was employed in making some arrangements, or in cleansing the kennel, or what not, when he fancied that he saw a hound, apparently fatigued and all bespattered with mud and mire, approach the kennel door, give one look in, and then turn off again ; on this he ran off to the main gates, and there, true enough, he saw a hound running at a rapid pace towards the town of Berkeley. " Dang it," said the man, on seeing one of his fellow-servants, " was I not certain that Know-the-way wor in Wales, I would swear that I

seed him here this moment agone.” On the afternoon of the same day the feeder at Cheltenham was preparing for the hounds, who, according to the custom of years, were on that day, being Saturday, hunting the Broadway country, when he also declared that he saw this dog, Know-the-way, enter the kennel; he instantly endeavoured to secure the dog, but without effect, as he had bolted and escaped him. On the evening of that day the noble owner of the pack arrived, the sport being over, at the inn at Broadway, where it was his custom to quit his hunter for a carriage on his return to Berkeley. As he alighted he observed a hound almost entirely exhausted—in fact, an animal whose physical powers had been so tried that the breath of life was almost extinct—lying on the door-step. He looked at the poor dog, when, to his utter astonishment, he recognised his ancient comrade in many glorious days’ sport, his poor hound Know-the-way; he raised him in his arms, he conveyed him into the house, and gave him restoratives, and then—smile not at such kind and sports-

manlike an act, ye Pharisees to all that is noble and generous in field sports—the Earl took Know-the-way into his well cushioned chariot, and conveyed him in all honour and due comfort to his former kennel, and his old companions welcomed him, and for several seasons afterwards this sagacious dog did good service in the Berkeley pack, and when his age permitted him no longer to join in the chase, warmth and comfort and kindness were bestowed on him; and when he died, a monument was erected to his memory, on which the virtues of the poor brute are set forth; and those who visit Berkeley may see proof of the fact I have here told—a tale well known in the Vale of Berkeley, and near the broad Severn, yet I would fain hope new, and therefore interesting, to thousands. Recollect, the distance from Wales to the Berkeley hunt it would be impossible to ascertain; as the crow flies, however, from point to point it is very considerable; but even the distance is less a source of astonishment than the fact of this hound having swam the river Severn, at a point where it

is by no means narrow, and where the current is extremely rapid. Arrived at Berkeley, he thence proceeded to Cheltenham without rest or refreshment, a distance of eighteen miles, and then to Broadway, twenty more. In fact, the courage, and powers of this animal can only be surpassed by his extraordinary instinct, which told him that the hounds not being at Cheltenham could be nowhere else but at Broadway, the day being Saturday. When I think of this sagacious animal, the following beautiful lines come back to memory—

“I am glad that my own eye watched thy dying,
For I know thy lot, old brute ;
And none can spurn thee where thou art lying,
Deep under the cedar’s root.
Thou wilt not meet a savage hand
To smite thee to the dust ;
Thou canst not pine with starving whine
For a morsel of wasted crust.
I’d rather look on thy grave, old hound,
Than wonder what hard fate thou hadst found.
I cherished thee long and liked thee well,
As the tears—aye, the tears—I have shed will tell :
There is nothing of shame in the lids that are wet,
When the drops are wrung by an honest regret.”

CHAPTER X.

TEN days of severe frost had bound the earth in an iron grasp, and our holidays were drawing to a close, when the will of God in one short night broke that iron grasp asunder as a reed. As I have said, it was our custom to sleep, *i. e.* the brothers, in adjoining apartments, the doors of which being ever thrown a-wide, was but a trifling separation. It was there, if I recollect aright, on the 14th of January in the Comet year, or thereabouts—(as that of 1851 will henceforth be termed that of the Exhibition, or the Eclipse, the former decidedly eclipsing the latter, inasmuch as there might have


been one in Norway; but forsooth! in Old England there was nothing but a soaker!)—that my younger fraternity entered my dormitory in a somewhat airy costume, considering the period of the year and the severity of the season; in fact, though a portion of his somewhat slender person was covered by a snowy chemise, the shaggy capote would have been somewhat more to the purpose—which snowy chemise descended only to his knees, thus discovering a very indifferent pair of understandings, and exclaimed—

“Brother mine, awake from thy heavy slumbers! Awake! and look from thy lattice-window. Awake!” he repeated, shaking me by the shoulders, and with some difficulty arousing me, inasmuch as we had been from home on a Christmas revel the night previous, and had kept it up till two A.M.; added to which—boy though I was—I already found myself most devotedly in love with a little blue-eyed fair-haired girl, with whom I had danced and eaten bon-bons; and I was dreaming, at the moment I

was so roughly disturbed, that somehow or another I had become lord and master of the Old Hall at home, and of the sweet little creature in a white frock, and sash as blue as her eyes, and ankles as taper as her wrists, who, in after life, might have shared my fortunes, had not circumstances or the events of life, happily perhaps for us both, doomed it otherwise; and all I can hope is that her fortune has been a bright one, which then promised to be as fair and happy as her sweet self.

Yes! truly was I dreaming of one who had caused my boyish admiration—as it was termed—at this *bal de bonbons*, or, in good Saxon words, a sweetmeat-dance, the previous night. A more graceful child never entered a ball-room; but as it was the first, and, with few exceptions, the last time I ever beheld her, and as the impressions of a school-boy are not very lasting, my sentiments on the subject of her charms were not sufficiently formed to create any lasting or painful effects. All I recollect of her and those days lang syne is this fact: she had

eyes like those of a gazelle ; the most graceful of necks ; and the prettiest little ears and hands I ever beheld, save those belonging to one other woman in the world. We ate bonbons together to some extent—this was certainly doing it sweet ; and we tasted some *ponche à la Romaine*—that is, Roman punch, such as the Pope doubtless enjoys diurnally with his cigar—and fancied ourselves unquestionably not the least worthy of notice in that pleasant assembly. But somehow or another she was not fond of dogs, or horses, or hunting. When I said, therefore, with all the seriousness of a man on whose head some forty winters had waned, that I hoped the frost would break, that a-hunting we might go, and asked her if she knew Allington Gorse, the Duke, Will Long, or Barleycorn and the Jumper, she replied that His Grace visited her papa ; but as for Will Long and Barleycorn, she could not recollect that they numbered among the number of her papa's familiars, and she fancied having never beheld them ; and as regards hunting, she looked on it as rather a barbarous sport



—running a poor animal to death for the sake of his “tail;” and as for Allington, she knew it very well, but Gorse was an enigma. This my first flame became, years after, a Lady Jane. Her brother having succeeded, at the death of his uncle, to an earldom, married—at least, such is my belief—a foreigner, and died. Be it as it may, I was certainly dreaming of the pleasant evening I had passed, and the future Lady Jane in particular, when the voice of my fraternity aroused me from a heavy slumber: and thus dissolved at once the created charms which were floating in my fevered brain to oblivion, converting my awaking thoughts into the very perceptible fact that it was daylight, and the still more convincing one of its being a bitter cold morning.

“By George!” I exclaimed, drawing the bed-clothes round my shoulders, “it’sarnation cold—as the Yankees have it—and what’s more, you have destroyed a most delightful dream.”

“Dreams be—!” What was the sequel to the exclamation I scarcely remember,

save that he added, "Instead of dreaming and snoozing there like a porker, be up and stirring! Are you not yet awake? or are you deaf to the sound of rain drops from the house-top?"

I was about to reply in his own style, and exclaim, "Be d—d to the drops! they will soon be converted into icicles!" when all at once it occurred to me that although the night previous had been starlight and clear, with a bright moon and a dense frost, that moon was encircled with a trifling mist, and that nothing being impossible to Him who created the world, it was quite possible the drops I heard were rain-drops, or the melting snow. And with this, and being now wide-awake in all conscience, I vaulted from my downy couch, as novelists often term the hardest of beds, displaying my juvenile person, which growing apace out of my midnight apparel, discovered my personal charms in a manner which would have shocked even Sally the housemaid. Open flew the window! and there—January morning though it was—I stood, unprotected, save by a yard or two of

calico, in a most happy state of pleasurable excitement—far more cheering, aye, and even warming, than the brightest of delightful fires, or the best of warming-pans.

Meltonians of high degree, by right of birth, or amiable qualities, or in your own estimation, do you recollect the sensations with which you have welcomed a good wholesome, undeniable, snow-destroying thaw after a severe black frost of a fortnight or three weeks' duration—during which time you have visited your well-filled stable of hunters, and sighed in vain for a change of weather, tapped the weather-glass, looked up at the sky, asked every other person you have met what he thought of the weather, and gone to bed hoping, yet not believing—for it was against all reason, having undeniable proofs to the contrary, in the fact of a northerly wind and cloudless sky—that it would thaw ere mornng?

Provincials, differing only in appellation, as far as I can see, from Meltonians, as regards hunting! what have your feelings been with a stud useless, save to the corn-

factor and the hay-market? In fact, a gentleman jealous of his lady-love—a lady who finds that her admirer whom she adored is cooling; a nephew who hears that his beloved Aunt, from whom he had expectations of a high order, had died without leaving him a penny; or a man on the Porchester mud, in a wherry, with the tide ebbing—as I have been—has, believe me! no such pangs as he who desires to go a-hunting, has horses, and the wherewithal, and yet is doomed to whistle and wait till such time—as our canny friends anent the border term it—the weather becomes moist. The only man who enjoys a ten days' frost is possibly he who has but one nag, and yet will, from pure love of the sport, hunt when he can; and this same nag, having had a severe day as a finish, is recovered by the rest thus afforded. As regards myself I can honestly declare, joyful as had been the skating days, when clad in fur, and muffled up as were she a Russian princess, instead of a Gloucestershire lassie of good degree, Gussy, attended by her devoted Wilson, allowed us to drag

her about the lake on a light sledge built for the occasion ; and still more joyful as were our shooting excursions, when, during the mid-day sun, she would come out to cry over a wounded hare, or carry home a dead rabbit—these pleasures were nothing compared to that we experienced on beholding on the park-land here and there patches of green ; the brook already meandering along ; the ice breaking up ; no longer the snow hung in flakes on the spreading branches of the fir plantation ; faster and faster splashed the streams from the spouts on the house-tops. The ducks quacked ; the geese cackled ; the cocks crew ; the laundry-maids were equally joyful in the realization of their long-expected hope and desire for soft water.

A thaw ! a thaw ! a kingdom for such a thaw, and a good horse to ride to the hounds. We were soon dressed and out to the stables. The very horses appeared to feel happy and excited in the renewed expectation of hunting days come again. Old Corbeau pricked up his ears and neighed ; Brilliant switched her splendid tail, as if a

thaw brought sun, summer, and flies; Silvertail pawed, and welcomed us. And dreary, dismal, wet, dull, and desolate as was that morning, the ground half snow, half mud, the trees dripping, the woods hoary and damp—in fact, all nature looked as if it had a severe cold, with the addition of chilblains, ear-ache, tooth-ache, rheumatism, and nose-blowing; the very elm-trees appearing to cry out for brandy and water, and the oaks for punch to cheer them up. But for all that, the hearts of sportsmen—and how many were there in merry England!—beat cheerfully, I warrant me, in anticipation of pleasures to come in the gallant chase. Even the dear old dad, as he stood with his back towards the fire, and opened the newspaper, exclaimed—

“Well, boys, we shall have the meets advertised again: and we must look out for *Bell* next week, for surely after this long frost there will be some brilliant runs. And as your holidays are closing, and Gussy and I shall once more be left in peace and quiet, I think I must give you one more day with

the hounds. If so be they meet, as Farmer Ploughshare informed us would be the case previous to the thaw—at Allington Gorse, distant though it be, what say you, Gussy, darling? Shall the boys go to Allington or not?"


"Go, by all means, dear Dad; and let me go also!"

"No! pet, that cannot be; the distance is too far—the weather too uncertain. So you must even lend your old father Brilliant, as a covert hack, and in return I will ask the Earl to draw the Brooklands coverts ere the season is over."

"Hurra! for Allington Gorse," we both exclaimed, as we seized the hands of the dear old sportsman, "Hurra! for Allington Gorse? Gussy shall write us a full account of the brilliant day at Brooklands, or her day at Brooklands, on Brilliant!"

At this moment Mr. Hind announced that a Mr. Snareall, an attorney, requested a few minutes' conversation with Mr. Western.

"Who?" exclaimed my open-hearted Dad.




"Mr. Snareall, Sir," replied Hind. "At least, such I understood to be his name."

From what occurred at the time, in my heart I already hated the name of this attorney, inasmuch as he interfered at the very moment that we were discussing the question of a fox-hunt that was to be; and unfortunately I had cause to hate the man himself—though I consider the word "hate" almost un-English—as much as his name.

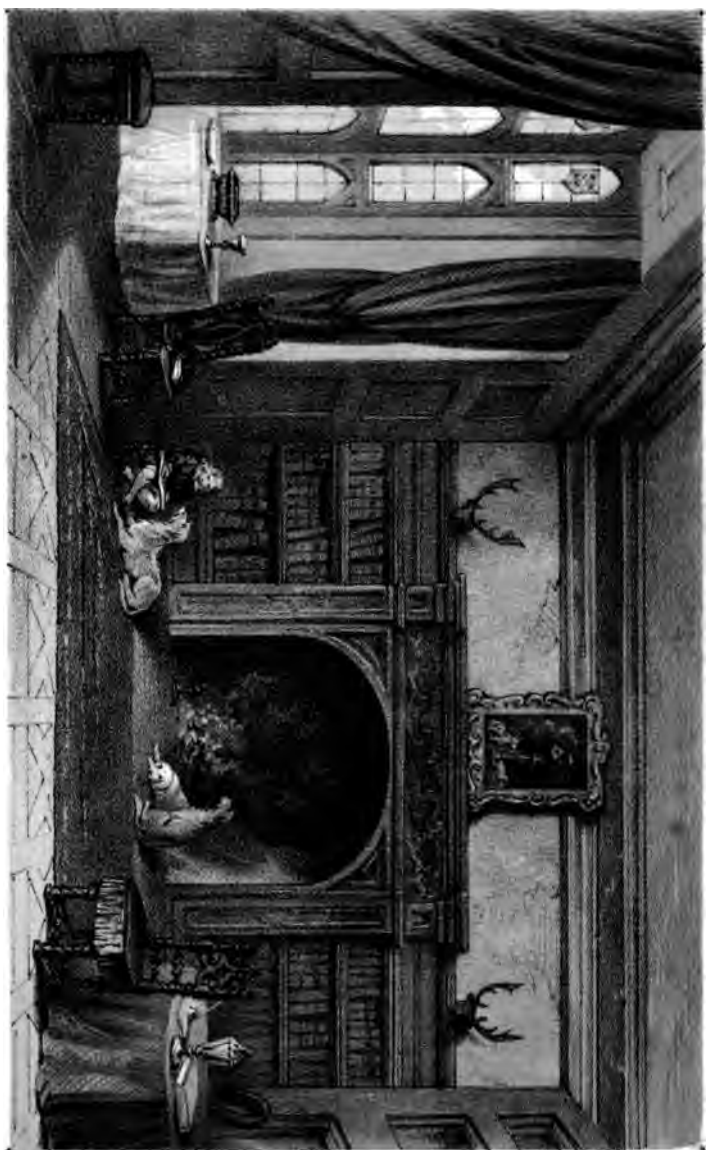
"Show him into the library," said the Governor—adding, "Snareall? Snareall? rather a poaching name! What does the fellow want?" Attornies seldom have hunters to sell, save under an execution; and the Brooklands estate is happily unmortgaged at present.

With this he departed to the library, as did my brother and I on a visit to Ploughshare, in order to ascertain some further particulars as to Allington Gos, as he termed it.



CHAPTER XI.

WHAT room more agreeable to inhabit than a well-filled library, appertaining to a squirarchial hall of olden days! Situated in one of England's most glorious and luxuriant vales, what comfort reigns there in mid-winter's time, when the broad hearth on which a well-seasoned log, bright and blazing, causes warmth and cheerfulness to the whole apartment—as in summer time the large windows thrown a-wide, admitting the refreshing air from the park, fragrant with the sweet smelling odours of jasmine, rose, and clematis, clustering o'er its oak-panelled and ancient mullions! Permit me,



C. W. HORTON.



however, brother sportsmen, and fair readers—I care not how many—to introduce you more particularly into the library of the Old Hall at home. Opening from my mother's bright and sunny drawing-room, as also communicating with the principal entrance, was my father's most charming, or more properly speaking, most commodious and agreeable sitting-room. In form it was oblong, and by no means lofty: three of its sides being filled with books, in old elaborately-carved oaken book-cases. Above the ample fire-place, in which were old-fashioned dogs instead of a grate, for the purpose of burning wood, was also a carved oaken and high mantel-piece—from childhood to manhood my delight. Many and many a winter's hour have I sat on a low stool, reading some sporting anecdote beneath its shelter, protected from all save the engrossing passion for sport I was imbibing from my book, as never was I tired of admiring the carved figures which adorned it, of men, horses, and dogs, purporting to be a hunting party of other days in full chase after the

antlered monarch of the woods ; easy chairs of capacious dimensions were scattered here and there about the room—some with high and ancient backs, some of more modern taste, and if not precisely so picturesque, at least more agreeable for physical comfort. A ponderous and handsomely carved writing-table stood in the centre of the room ;

“ And here and there were scattered o’er
Some relics quaint of ancient lore,
With modern luxuries and ease.”

•

But that which really attracted my youthful admiration more than all else—aye, even more than the elaborately-carved gentlemen in jack-boots with hunting-horns, who appeared, every one of them, to be doing their best to catch the stag, instead of allowing the hounds—was a beautiful and valuable picture by Murillo, which hung above the high mantel-piece, well-nigh to the ceiling of the apartment—the subject of which was supposed to be, and I believe literally was, a full-length portrait of Murillo himself, in hunting, or rather shooting costume, leaning

on the barrel of a somewhat lengthy gun, with two beautiful Spanish pointers at his feet. So expressive was his countenance—so life-like the man—so true to nature the dogs, that I ever looked on it with a feeling that, were I in a position to buy a picture on which the sum of a thousand guineas was named as a price, that was the one; and were I a woman, and could fall in love—behold the man! with his speaking eye, and noble expressive countenance. If I admired this beautiful specimen of dead art, however, how far more I loved a still more beautiful specimen of living nature, whose usual place was, stretched on the hearth-rug before the blazing log! This was a noble rough deerhound—the pet and friend of all within the house, as of a large circle. Dear old fellow! when sorrow came to the home where once plenty and love, cheerfulness and affection, so fully existed, his caress was never the less warm, his true heart never failed; his master, and those his master loved—he loved, without change, interest, doubt, jealousy, or hypocrisy—to the last.

Although for the moment digressing from my story, I must beg leave to mention one or two trifling anecdotes in connection with this noble animal, which will not be unacceptable to sportsmen, and, I trust, not to human nature. My sister had a small but beautiful terrier—in fact, at times, more than one. The love of animals was a family and amiable failing. These pugnacious little gentlemen were continually getting themselves into scrapes. On one occasion the smaller one, doubtless not without deserving it, was receiving a tolerable thrashing from a heavy bulldog, belonging to a neighbouring butcher, when this noble deerhound—the gentlest of all creatures, till roused—seized the bulldog, strong and savage as he was, and destroyed him instantly. His gentleness to women, as his love for biscuits, was remarkable. We scarcely dared mention the word “biscuit,” but he was restless and distressed till he got one: and what is still more remarkable, though I fancy not uncommon among dogs, the mere mention of the word church was

quite sufficient to induce him to remain calmly before the fire; whereas on other days he would bound with joy to follow us the moment any one appeared with hat or bonnet on.

Thus much for the interior of my father's favourite room, of which this dog was ever the living ornament. Now those who will stand by my side, and within the shelter of the large protecting windows, shall look forth on one of dear England's noble home prospects, such as cannot be compared with—for they exist not—in any other country in the world. Smooth as a carpet of Genoa velvet, and green as the early wheat of spring, behold an extensive lawn sloping to the margin of a beautiful lake, the side most distant from the house being sheltered by spreading oak and beech trees, intermingled with many splendid specimens of evergreens of all kinds, reaching to the water's edge,—the trees dipping their pendant boughs, stooping as if to drink—while beyond, and higher up the park, a dense and magnificent English wood entirely protected

the beautiful, though by no means extensive domain, from the keen north-easterly blasts. In midsummer time this beauteous lawn, interspersed with many-coloured beds of roses, geraniums, and other lovely and brilliant hues, was a perfect picture, which imagination can scarcely embrace; while in spring and autumn it offered scarcely less charms; and what a battle-field has it been to us, when, assembled there, some half-score merry lads were wont to meet in battle-array, with snowballs as their weapons, and the frozen lake their place of retreat! Possibly, however, of all the seasons of the year, the autumn was—to me, at least, when the age of manhood was approaching—that I looked on the well-remembered scene with most softened feelings of admiration and delight. The glorious old wood, the gnarled trees which, could they have spoken, might have told many a tale of my ancestry, particularly of the sporting members—really, in its autumnal garb of varied tints, when the sun cast its rays full upon its noble sweep, was beyond description beautiful. The placid

lake, the distant luxuriant country beyond the park, seen in the grey stillness of a bright but sinking October day, the lawn with its geraniums, verbenas, and dahlias : the distant sounds of the sheep-bell, and the young sportsman's heart filled with pleasurable anticipation of the approaching hunting-season, was and will combine a memory that will go with me to the grave. But affection, as possibly artistic taste, may draw a still more pleasing picture : therefore, Mr. Snare-all, you must wait awhile ensconced in that commodious arm-chair, in deep thought as you appear to be; instead of looking from the lattice-window. It is possibly your pleasure, as you sport with men's hearts, instead of fair wild game, to think how best you can gain your point, or make your conscience easy—to run fairly into your quarry. For my part, give me glorious nature—God's own handiwork : forsooth, I could almost live in the woodlands, desiring to meet solely at the covert side, or in the middle of a good run, with men ; for there, forsooth, all evil passions appear to evaporate, and nothing

but the very cream of the human heart displays itself. However, we have all our tastes, feelings, and professions : so rest you there, Mr. Attorney-at-law, while I look once more on the well-kept lawns of dear old Brooklands. Let the season be the end of the merry month of May, when all nature is bedecked in a garb of brightest hues—the charming, cheerful, happy month of May ! harbinger of summer ! advent of the nightingale ! Fancy a delicious morning of that truly pleasant month—yes, delicious is the word, though doctors may differ as to whether there is or is not anything delicious that touches not the palate. . Prythee ! let them differ : the morning was delicious ; and on that lawn, amid those bright flower-beds, there stood a group, beyond the power of my pen to sketch in all its beauty. Beneath a wide-spreading and handsome cedar, which not long since I witnessed with overflowing eyes, half reclined my young and graceful sister, Gussy—she had thrown aside a Leg-horn hat, the brim of which was large enough to have satisfied the richest of West

Indian planters : in her lap a small and beautiful bright-eyed terrier had established itself ; while another, equally handsome, but of a totally different breed, was making a jealous attack to supersede him in so favoured a place. With the one hand she was caressing these her smaller favourites, while the other arm was thrown around the neck of the noble hound I have already alluded to, looking up towards her face with his mild, full, and affectionate eyes, and literally resting his head upon her shoulder, flowing on which, in golden ringlets, her tresses, free as the air she was enjoying, descended. Blue was the vault of heaven ; bright the warm spring sun ; calm the silvery lake ; while birds innumerable in the distant woodlands, as in every tree and bush at hand, sung forth a chorus of song such as no human voice can ere attempt to vie with—no, not even that of Jenny Lind.

Watch at the window : see another actor walks across this one of nature's most beautiful theatres : her voice speaks in friendly words—"Come, darling ! As usual, I have

found you beneath the cedar, with your dumb friends : and, ah ! faithless ! how often have you promised me not to throw aside your hat : this hot sun will destroy your complexion !”

“ Yes, mamma ; but you see these bright-eyed friends of mine asked me to come and have half an hour’s play ; but now the time is up, and I am ready, dearest mother, to do all you wish.”

“ Well, love !” putting her arm around her neck, spite the gentle reprimand as to her complexion, &c. ; and both mother and daughter—two fond friends—departed from this beauteous scene ; a scene, pardon me ! reader ; always so endeared to my boyish recollection, that in the hour of sorrow, as in that of joy, in the battle-field in foreign lands, in the gallant chase in my own, it has often crossed my wandering imagination, and caused it to halt there.

CHAPTER XII.

“ I am a stranger here in Glostershire—
These high wild hills, and rough uneven crags,
Draw out our miles and make them wearisome.”

BUT what of Mr. Snareall? he has not been looking from that window? No. True, it was winter time. Scarcely had his small and fox-like eyes been cast on that glorious picture of Murillo; if so, the thought arising from such act had been to consider its probable value, or to wonder how, having such a possession, a man could allow it to remain at the top of his mantel-piece, instead of converting it into stock.

No—he reclined luxuriantly ensconced between the cushions of a large arm chair, not however with the ease or apparent habit of one who daily finds himself so seated as a matter of course, but with the vulgar and hateful presumption which looks on poverty as dishonour, and wealth the one and only virtue which enables man to mount the ladder of distinction here on earth ; and for all he believed to the contrary, to attain the bliss of heaven hereafter—and as far as the earth is concerned, he was, unfortunately, not far wrong. In fact, in the estimation of Mr. Snareall, the man wanting money, however exalted his talents, his virtues, or even his rank, unless he possessed an actual title—which to him had a value—was nobody, and ought not to encumber the earth with his presence ; and, in like manner, all human beings rose in his estimation in exact proportion to their worldly wealth. Money was his idol—to make it his daily occupation, to increase it his hourly thought—his nightly dream. He had, in fact, but one object in life—in plain language, the surest and

quickest way of turning a shilling into a guinea. A lord was only a lord to him, if wealth was not attached to the coronet ; a woman, however fair in person or refined in mind, a mere animal of household necessity, to order or cook dinners, and receive or wait on company—save that she had wealth, and then she was an angel. The fairest landscape was to him a desert if the lands on which he looked were of little value per acre, or the glorious woods unfitted for the axe. Sportsmen were mere savages who expended money on expensive and evanescent pastimes, instead of converting that money by usury into more—sporting, in its practical sense, a joy unknown to him, save the sporting with people's feelings to his own advantage—horses, mere animals to assist the labours, not the pleasures of man ; dogs, created brutes to guard the house from the midnight burglar, or to tend the flocks.

Such was the individual who presumed thus unsolicited, to seat himself in a chair, which from generation to generation had been handed down in the family at Brook-

lands, and wherein the highest in the land in birth, and mind, and virtue, had been proud to find themselves—when the Squire of Brooklands entered, and thus courteously addressed him,—he scarcely arose.

“Good morning, Sir! I would hope that I have not kept you waiting? To what may I be indebted for the pleasure of your visit? magisterial business, I conclude—or are you desirous to add to my stud? If so, I may as well tell you at once that my stable is tolerably full at the moment.”

“Neither the one, or the other,” replied Mr. Snareall, only half rising from his well cushioned chair; “neither the one, or the other. I know nothing whatsoever of an ’orse, save that those in the London cabs, poor brutes, are rarely up to the work required of them, considering the price charged for conveyance. And as for magisterial business, I am a Londoner who arrived last night by mail, and was put down at the end of a narrow Lane, whence I had to walk with my bag on my shoulder half a mile in the mud and dark, to the Western Arms—im-

properly termed an Inn—there to obtain a bad bed and a worse chop, for which I shall probably have to pay high.”

“ Well, Sir, pardon me ! it will teach you this lesson in future. When next you come into Gloucestershire, ask for some eggs and bacon, or bacon and eggs, and a quart of home-brewed instead of a chop and sherry, and you will be well served for little outlay ; and now, what may be your business ? Is it of dog or horse, mead or woodland ? We are plain, and I trust, honest people in these parts—respecting men for their virtues, and, as I hope, pitying and pardoning their errors ; loving nature for nature’s sake, and even dumb brutes for their affection to man. So fear not my faithful companion, though he certainly does not look pleasant to-day ;” this had reference to the noble deer hound I have already named, who having followed his master into the library, was apparently ill-pleased with the manner of the visitor, from some cause or another derived from instinct. “ A splendid animal, is he not, Mr. Snarball ?”

“Snareall, at your command, Sir—a very fine brute indeed, but I am little accustomed to the canine race; moreover, so large a creature as this would be insupportable in a metropolitan residence, and—down you—ladies’ lap-dogs, Squire, (and this with some vulgar familiarity) are bad enough, but I cannot abide big creatures like this. What a vast quantity of victuals fit for human beings he must consume. In fact, the dumb brutes are not particularly to my taste.”

“Nor the talking ones to mine,” the noble animal appeared to say, as with his brilliant eyes he first looked fondly on his master, and then turning towards Mr. Snareall, gazed at the man—as much as to say, “only give me a chance, that’s all, and I would shake the breath out of your body for speaking so disparagingly of my race;” while the Squire, taking up the cudgels in behalf of his favourite hound, exclaimed with some ire,—“Dumb creatures, dumb brutes as you term them—yet not in the sense you use the word, I fancy, dumb creatures! Why the two homely words convey an appeal to our protection and pity.

Dumb creatures are in their love so faithful, so patient in their sufferings, so submissive under wrong, so powerless for remonstrance or redress, that we take their parts against the human brutes their oppressors, as naturally as were it a positive duty. I am not sure that I do not carry my sympathy still further. But I see, Sir, you do not go with me. I therefore ask your forbearance that I should have commenced a conversation in which doubtless you are little interested, and consequently have wearied you—so once more let me say, now to business. To what am I indebted for this early visit?"

"Why, Squire, I will be as frank and as brief as possible," said the little man in black, who, though he boasted of no tail, must have belonged to the Nick family; for as he arose from his soft cushioned chair, his little sharp eyes appeared to glisten, as those of a hawk about to strike his quarry. "I come not from myself or of myself, though I am literally speaking here myself,—but from that highly respectable trio or firm of Bagall, Payne *and* Snareall, of which I am the

junior, though I would hope, not the least important limb."

"Oh! a lawyer! a lawyer, are you?" said my good old parent, who was then unaccustomed to the profession—would he had ever been so.

"Yes, Sir! I have the honour to belong to that useful and dignified calling; so I may at once proceed to inform you that we three A.A.L.'s, which readeth, attorneys-at-law—were sitting together a few nights since, after office hours, over a broiled bone and a sneaker."

"A sneaker!" exclaimed my governor, "and what may that be?"

"Why, Squire, a sneaker—did you never hear it called by that name? Well, to explain in City phraseology, it meaneth nothing more or less than a stiff glass with or without hot or cold—of cognac, rum or ginsums, as may be, according to taste, with just sufficient aqua-pure, or in nature's terms, hard-water, to extinguish the fire, but not the aroma, of the alcohol. This is a sneaker—so-called from the peculiarly mild,

yet extremely delicious manner with which it ripples down the throat, most agreeably exciting the palate, as the senses of man. A broiled bone, or a rasher, such as you recently alluded to, or even a crust and a piece of Cheshire, and an onion from its mother earth, are most undeniably sociable accompaniments ; exciting the mind to more than ordinary powers, and assisting digestion in a most desirable manner. Indeed, I most strongly suggest and recommend a nocturnal sneaker with the accompanying little agreeable entrees I have named to your honoured self in particular, as to the whole Brooklands establishment in general, not even forgetting the female branch of your household, who, if they differ not from the young women who are bred and born within sound of St. Paul's, are above all the human race most addicted to sneakers and young onions."

"I feel highly obliged for your suggestion—but pray proceed with your business."

"Well, Sir, to continue—we lawyers are a practical species, given little to writing ; our clerks make out our bills' of costs, spoil

parchment and issue writs. But as I was saying, Bagall, Payne, and your humble servant, were enjoying a little physical, as well as mental recreation after the labours of the day, when our good waiting-maid, Matilda, entered the room, and placed on the table that friend to mankind, and the people of England in particular, known to all the reading as the unreading world, 'The Times.' Well, Squire—the 'Times' lay then and there on the mahogany, when Payne, whom we term the dirty work Co.; that is, a right, straightforward, sharp, legal adviser, who never says die, but go a-head and get all, or beggar your neighbour. What's the odds? his money, his coat, or his life? it's all the same in the end—in fact, a regular out-and-outer in the way of practical business—having placed his third empty tumbler on the table and crossed his slippered feet on the fender, suggested a trifle of the news. News! exclaimed Bagall, finishing his sneaker, and taking up the paper, news! Why, by St. George! the grand Broad Guage have got their Bill to Bath and Bristol, and contem-

plate a branch right through the Vale of Brooklands, to the good old City of Gloucester."

"The devil they do!" said Mr. Western, "then I'll be hanged if they touch my land."

"Pardon me, Sir, pardon me"—interrupted Snareall. "I said projecting, not projected—nothing is decided, in fact."

"And never will be, while I am owner of this property."

"The Parliament House of Commons are a powerful, and oft-times, a self-willed body of legislators—so it is impossible to say what may or may not occur—events and time only can explain. Bagall, however, with a keen perception of advancing times, and a still keener head for the main chance, seeing the possible, nay, probable intention of the Broad Gauge Directors, has—or rather is, desirous of giving them the go-by. So we three—that is, the Co.; Bagall, Payne and self, put our heads together over another sneaker, 'with' Squire. Yes, observe me, 'with' Squire, and ere the night passed, it forcibly occurred to us that something might

accrue to our respectable firm, if leaving the Great Guage to project, we should proceed at once to business, and get up a line ourselves.

“This great question unanimously agreed on, we retired and slept soundly on the subject; and the next morning, after a substantial breakfast, having in no manner deviated from the previous night’s decision, we requested the opinion of Mr. Hawkseye, R.E., the celebrated Engineer, who took up a map of the county, and with a broad nibbed pen, laid down a narrow guage line which will run right through the east end of your park, sweeping away, I regret to be obliged to notice, one of your lodges and sundry fine old oaks, passing, I very much fear, through the centre of your breeding paddocks, but putting several thousand pounds into your pocket. This settled, Bagall draw up a prospectus, with much intelligence and conciseness—selecting in his imagination, and forwarding to the printer, with an assurance of their acquiescence, several influential names, among whom you number as a Di-

rector. Of course, adding those of the firm as legal advisers—Hawkseye as engineer, and Dick Sawdust, Bagall's wife's cousin, as Secretary. This speedily arranged, we dined together at Richmond—turtle, turbot, venison; a few extra trifles, chateau margot, and so forth, naturally putting the outlay down to the account of Company—to be, a mere trifle. Nine, thirteen, including waiters and sneakers—and here I am, as a County Inspector-General, Canvasser and Enquirer, soother of landlords, and so forth, at your command.”

As I heard my dear old parent subsequently admit, in his first moment of anger, he could scarcely refrain from taking up the poker and beating the rascal's brains out; and then he laughed, and added, “Well, his skull might have been too thick and hard even for a poker;” and then he bethought himself to throw him out of window but that might have injured Gussy's flower-beds—or have kicked him out of the room. But Squire Western was a gentleman, which comprises innumerable excellencies

and noble feelings—moreover, he was benevolent and gentle; so he commanded himself in a great measure, only exclaiming—

“Then, Sir, whatever you may call yourself, the sooner you return to your insolent employers, the better. Tell them that for three hundred years my ancestors have lived respected at Brooklands, loved by their tenants without law or lawyers, engineers or railways—that hitherto I have considered an Englishman’s house his castle, and if any of your people put a foot on my land, my servants will have orders summarily to eject them, either over the gates or into the lake. It is not my custom to treat a stranger with discourtesy or inhospitality, therefore, I beg you will order refreshment, and then the sooner you leave Brooklands, the better—and mark me, should my name appear in print as a Director in your scheme, hateful as law is to me, I will sell my whole estate rather than not effectually punish you—so take warning. And now, excuse me, Mr. Bagall, Payne, or Snareall—whichever you

may think fit to call 'yourself, as a member of so respectable a firm—I am going to Low Bottom Copse with my boys to look for woodcocks—better pastime, I imagine, than concocting railways.”

CHAPTER XIII.

“GOING to Low Bottom Copse with his boys, to look for cocks,” sneeringly exclaimed Snareall, as the Squire left the library. “Going to low bottom devil—degenerate human nature—vulgar sporting habits—wading through mud and mire, wood and brake, to kill a few harmless birds, which can be bought for money in the market—and this is termed sport. Alas! what frivolity and weakness, at the very moment I come to offer thousands for the making a mere footpath through his property—poor benighted old man—his tastes are sufficiently displayed on these walls. Here a mare with

a foal by her side. That picture alone would fetch hundreds—and another, a sporting piece by Meadows, doubtless valued at another thousand—and so on. Alas! what little reverence for all powerful money—were they mine, how soon would I convert them into cash! No wonder, such people as these submit to be taxed—taxed, and so they ought to be, that we the working bees in the great hive of life may live. They have means to feast, hunt, shoot and sleep; but such men as Bagall, Payne and Snareall, never sleep—or if they do, it is ‘with one eye open,’ like the Bristolians. No, they are ever wide awake while money can be extracted from the pockets of their fellow-creatures.”

Would that Bagall had been bagged himself, ere he or his Co., Mr. Snareall, ever crossed the threshold of dear old Brooklands. Payne would have caused us all less suffering in after years. As it was, at the moment Mr. Snareall went his way, fuming and fretting, and wondering how any one could be so *great* a simpleton as to pass his time in

wasting powder and riding to hounds, while thousands were to be had for the mere asking.

We, then merry sporting boys, being soon joined by the governor, walked briskly away that fair winter's morning to the most celebrated spot in all the Vale for cocks. Scarcely had we reached it, than whir-whir-bang, a miss, by St. Hubert ! " I was thinking of that confounded lawyer and his insolence," said my father. " Ten thousand pounds, for what ? to drive a roaring, tearing steam-engine right through my home park and destroy all the privacy of happy Brooklands. No ! no ! never, while I live. Whir-whir-bang, again—how now ? another miss !" and yet he was reckoned the best shot of the county—" Hang me, but this fellow has unnerved me with his confounded railways ; but come, boys, I will kill the next for a crown." And so he did,—and another, and another, till the short winter's day closed ; and once more a happy family party, we sat around a blazing hearth at the old hall at home. Dinner over,—as was occa-

sionally the custom on cock-shooting days when we were all alone—the old keeper was directed to attend, bringing with him on a sort of large wicker-work tray, the produce of the day's sport. This was a matter of great enjoyment, not only to Arty, as myself—but verily, Gussy loved to handle the birds. Even my dear mother would sometimes, though calmly, enter into our joys, in her delight at witnessing the health and spirits we gained by being constantly in air and exercise. Moreover, the aged keeper was a character, in these days rarely met with—as fit a subject in physical bearing for the display of talent in an artist—as were his many excellences as a servant, and qualities as a man. My pen, I greatly fear, will but feebly do him justice. Nevertheless, though long years have passed since I looked on his manly form, and he has ceased to be numbered among the living—yet he stands out so clear in my mind's eye, that I fear not to be enabled to sketch him as he appeared on that memorable evening at Brooklands—inasmuch as it was the era

which commenced those events which cleared the stables of its gallant hunters—the woodlands of game—the hall of generous hospitality—breaking the best of parents' hearts, and leaving eventually little or nothing to those who remained, but firm affection the one for the other. The Brookland acres were sold or mortgaged—entails cut off—the Hall let, and those who had been nursed in the lap of luxury, and educated in all the generous principles of human nature, became professional wanderers.

But the dining-room door is thrown open, and Jack Forster is announced by Hind, the butler.

"Come in, Jack"—said the Squire, "put your spoils on the side-board, and drink the King—God bless him."

Now Jack, or old Jack—sometimes dear old Jack, as we familiarly termed him—stood exactly six-feet-two without his shoes, and was proportionably strongly built, though an ounce of flesh could scarcely be found on his body. Whatever the amount of muscle, his hands and feet were large and strong,

though not ill-formed ; while his face was one of the handsomest and most benevolent I ever beheld—forehead high and broad, eyes brilliant and mild, with a smile about his mouth which many a fair woman might have envied. For all that—kind though his disposition—with temper gentle as a lamb—he was firm in his duty as a keeper—as brave as a lion, and moreover, an admirable sportsman and very fair shot. Jack, in truth, was much esteemed by the whole family, as was he in the neighbourhood ; a fact which went further to prevent poaching, than his well-known courage and active zeal. He had lived with two generations at Brooklands Hall, and died in their service.

Jack did as he was bid ; laid the game on the sideboard, and advancing to the table, stood as erect as a life-guardsman saluting “the Duke”—as noble a specimen of the animal man, as man’s eye ever looked on, or woman’s either. The Squire of Brooklands filled a bumper—the glasses in those days were not quite so ridiculously small as they were subsequently, or quite so large, or so

greatly improved as they now are. So, raising the thimbleful to his lips, he said in broad Somersetshire dialect, for he was a Somersetshire man—staring full in the face of dear Gussy, whom he had held in his arms as a baby, and looked on as a sort of angel in petticoats—"Here's a health to the King; God bless him, and Miss Gussy in particular."

"Very well," said the good Squire, "very well, Jack; but His Majesty's health should always be drank alone and with reverence. So here," filling another bumper, "toss off this according to your own desire—two such glasses only make one for such as you."

"Well, your magisterial honour"—he had the greatest respect for his master's magisterial dignity, possibly from his constantly threatening people who were found poaching or trespassing, to take them before his honour, the Magistrate of Brooklands: "I'll just drink Miss Gussy again, Missus, and all the family at home."

"And a right good toast—now, Jack, what have we done to-day?"

“Done, your worship? why nothing worthy of a magistrate,—I’m stagnated”—this was a favourite word of his—“I’m stagnated if your honour did not miss two cocks most promiscuously. I’ve seed your worship kill dead many livelier birds nor they, and the distance was noot at them of the morn.”

“Well, Jack, never mind what I missed, but let the ladies see what we killed.”

“Well, I’m stagnated your honour; but there was not much to-day for a sporting magistrate, and him the Squire of Brooklands—for let whom will say nay—I, Jack, whose lived well nigh two score’ years in the family, will back him either with flint or these new fashioned caps, to beat ere a lad in the two counties.”

“Then let us see the bag of to-day.”

“Well, your worship, there is as nice a couple of young birds as ere fell to powder; handle them, Miss Gussy; beautiful plumage, fat, and fit for the spit; I’m stagnated if they are not. There are two couple and a half more to match, a couple of ducks, two

brace of pheasants, a lease of hares, and nine rabbits, and what's more, your honour, we scared away a fine young dog-fox, from one of our best preserves—so the boys cannot complain of old Jack—I'm stagnated, but I mean the young gentlemen."

At this correction we all laughed heartily, while the Squire added, "I should regret to see the day when the hounds draw the Brooklands' coverts without finding, and after all missing or killing. I think our sport was tolerable this morning."

"Well, your worshipful honour -- well, I'm stagnated : but I recollect the day when your honour never left Low Bottom Copse without a bag full of cocks, and not a miss. To-day you killed only two couple and a half, and missed three favirish shots. Master Fred brought two couple to bag, and hares and rabbits counts for little or nothing in Brookland Vale."

"All true, Jack—all true. Now tell me, how goes the weather to-night, more frost ? or will the foxes have to fly for their lives again to-morrow ?"

“Mild, your honour—mild as small beer, and fair—wind southerly—we shall have rain ere morning, or I’m stagnated, but not much of it. His Grace of Gloucestershire meets near home, at the Cross Kays, and the Earl at Broadways. ’Tis Saturday, if your worship minds, and them young fellows—I’m stagnated—beg your honour’s pardon, Master Fred—and the Duke’s godson, looks though as if they’d loik to be at both hunts at the same time, and see both the warmints killed. But the Duke meets at Harlington on Monday, I s’poses. You three will be there, cause I seed Bradly a taking a hairing on Corbeau, and he told me he was just a winding on him, and taking the bains out of him that he might lead the field on Monday; and Jeemes was on Silvertail, and the boy, George, also looked affrighted, was on Friar Tuck, thè new ’orse—and they all three started when I left them and went across the park and over the hurdles and brook at the waters meet, like antelopes.”


“The deuce they did, Jack,” said I; “confound that fellow Bradly—he promised me,

when next he gave the hunters a gallop across the park, I should ride Friar Tuck myself, to try his paces."

"And so you shall, my lad, if events and weather permit, at Allington Gorse. But recollect, boys, this must be the last hunt this season; and now, Jack, good night, for I see Miss Gussy is getting sleepy. The boys and I will have a round or two at Oronoco,"—in which I well recollect having been so interested as often to lose my temper, which, however, I soon happily regained, as who would not in such company as that of Squire Western—"so once more, good night, and may sound and uninterrupted sleep prepare your mind to enjoy the peace of the morrow's Sabbath."

CHAPTER XIV.

'Tis the afternoon of Sunday, the beautiful service—made doubly impressive by the manner in which it was performed, as well as the knowledge that we listened to a noble-hearted Christian—is over; and we issue forth in the mild, but closing evening, to bid good-day to one, to receive the hearty “hope you are all well at the Hall, young gentlemen,” from another, with many a kind word from old and young, mostly tenants of Brooklands—who lingered in the churchyard, or slowly went homewards. Among those with whom we stopped to speak, however, was young Ploughshare, already named,



Mr. Selwyn, and the village surgeon. The first, a straightforward fellow, who could read and write—this was the extent of his education. But he was a good practical farmer, possessing a sound, honest heart, and withal was humble as to his own merits, save in regard to riding, and strange as it may appear, it was of all things that in which he least excelled; plough he could marvellously well, reap, and mow, and all that better than any of the labourers on his farm. But ride he could not, he had neither hand or seat; but he had nerve, and that which is vulgarly termed pluck, or, more properly speaking, the manly courage of an English yeoman. And the consequence was often well nigh fatal to him, for he would charge a fence almost impracticable—which a good rider might possibly have surmounted—but into which or over which he was sure to fall; not a wit annoyed, however, at such continual downfalls—for loosely as he rode, lightly he managed to fall, and, save an occasional bruise and much mud, he carried little harm from the hunting field.

“ Well, young gentlemen,” he exclaimed, as we met, “ the day for Allington Gos is nigh at hand—won’t we have a burster, that’s all, if he goes downward across Farmer Gresham’s water meadows, and faces them ere stiff hox fences, as he did last season, where I got such a smasher in the clay-pit. The weather is mild to-night, and promises fair. But here comes Doctor Lingforth ; how are you, sir—for the meet to-morrow, I presume, like the rest of us ? ”


“ No, Ploughshare, no, I have given up the chase—people are becoming more healthy, and patients decrease. True, corn is cheap, what then, horses are dear—and money, without patients, scarce.”

“ Dang it now, Doctor,” this was a favourite expression of Ploughshare, “ dang it, you’re joking, sir, patients are as thick as blackberries—but people looks to reason now-a-days, and drugs. While homehoppity, and all the ‘ appities ’ and isms you have started of late are enough to frighten a man to death, instead of curing him ; much better have stuck to your boots and leathers, with

a little brandy and water at times, sir, than be always recommending water cures and the like o' that."

"Ploughshare speaks truly, 'dang it,'" said Mr. Selwyn, who now joined us, imitating his voice and manner, "all arrant humbug and unprofessional, believe me, fit subjects for old women and quacks—unworthy honourable men, belonging to an honourable profession. You will soon lose ground here, Lingforth, with your water cures, and isms, and so forth. Why old Dame Marsden, who lives in one of my cottages, actually refused a bottle of good old port I sent to her, hearing she was ill. What does all this mean, I said to my good housekeeper, Vaughan, does not the old girl require nourishment and strength—possibly she prefers brandy to port: if so, let her have it, by all means, or a dozen of porter or stout, or some good old ale."

"'To be sure she does, sir,' was her reply, 'but the Doctor gave positive orders that she should touch nothing but pure spring water, without it were possible to obtain



ariated water.' Ariated water, what on earth is that? I exclaimed—ariated humbug, I must see to this myself; so I filled my hunting flask with some right good French cognac, and down I went to the poor old woman's cottage—and sure enough, nourishment she required, and nothing more. The first thing I did was to pour half a wine glass of the brandy down her throat, which revived her wonderfully—she hummed and hawed, and spat a little, and so forth, but then spoke out firm, like a good hound on a scent in covert. Now, old Sally, said I, tell me truly what's the matter, what are your ailments—have you seen Lingforth of late? At the sound of your name she commenced the most pitiable lamentations, exclaiming, 'Oh! Lor, oh! Lor, I've been and done it, I've been and done it.' Done it, done what? said I, somewhat alarmed at her excitement. 'Oh! Lor, oh! Lor,' she continued, 'I been and took the spirits;' And very good spirits are they, I added, believe me, they were imported direct from France at forty shillings the gal-

lon, and have been ten years in my cellar. 'Wery good, wery good, and wery reviving, your honour—so I'll just taste another drop, and tell you all.'"


Here the whole party laughed, as well they might, in which Lingforth joined. And I took the opportunity of asking what she did tell.

"Tell me, Fred," continued Selwyn, "tell me—why the truth, boy; she wanted wholesome food and nourishment, fresh air without, and warmth within—cold water for a poor old woman of seventy-eight, all balderdash. What does the Doctor give you, Marsden? I asked. 'Give me, your honour, why naught, your honour, but cold water and these wee bits of pills.' Wee bits of pills, what pills? 'Why he calls them Globutes, sir.' Globutes—let me have a look. On this she handed me a little box, filled with pills about the size of a pin's head. Poison, I said, throwing the whole into the fire, poison—you're a dead woman, that's certain, as the sparks fly downwards.

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‘Ah! Lor, ah! Lor,’ she groaned again; ‘but Mr. Lingforth is a good man, and would not poison a feeble old woman the like of me;’—no nor a young one either, when he acts as he usually does, with reason and common sense. He is a good man; but you see, he has given up hunting and taken to quackery.

“Now, listen to me, Lingforth—hunting enlarges a man’s heart, creates digestion, and consequently increases good temper, and does more to make a man healthy and wise, if not wealthy, than all the ‘oppotys’ and isms in the world. And as regards women, old or young, if instead of being gulled by some self-opiniated old quack or young quack, who takes their money and practises on their bodies, and cajoles them, they would listen to common sense and common reason, take air and exercise, wholesome food, have faith in the natural advantages and mercies which God has granted to them, and come out occasionally with the hounds, they would learn to enjoy life. So I told Marsden to take no more poison, but to send up to the



Hall for some good strong beef tea or soup, with the assurance it would never be denied to her ; and send also to me, I added, for a bottle or two of sound port, and see if I refuse you, that's all—and with that I left her. And now, Lingforth, no offence, I have spoken in plain language ; nevertheless, I pray you come to the Lodge, and join these boys, whom you ushered into the world—and a pleasant one is it if people were not ever endeavouring to make it otherwise ; forget for the evening your apothys and isms, and come and taste a bottle of first-rate claret, that will do your heart good."

"Thank you, Mr. Selwyn," replied the Doctor, "on my life I cannot refuse you, though forsooth half the men in the county would have called you out."

"Then they would have proved themselves exactly what I have been fancying you had become, but which I am heartily rejoiced to find you are not—for, believe me, I should regret, if I had an accident in the hunting field to-morrow, to send for any other practitioner to cure me. But wait a moment,

Fred, my boy—going home, aye—run, boy; run and stop him, for I want a word with your excellent father.” Having overtaken him at the moment he was about to step into the family coach, with my mother, Gussy, and the governante, who had all attended church that evening, I informed him that Mr. Selwyn wished to speak to him. “It is true,” he said, coming up. But first addressing my mother with, “Well, Mrs. Western, I hope you are not a convert to the medical fashion of the day—ariated water, globutes, and so forth, as old Marsden terms them; pray, send the poor woman some soup.”

“I will do as you desire as regards the soup be assured, but I am as likely to become an atheist or the pope, as to be a convert to the system you name.”

“I knew, dear Madam, you would do as I wished, and far more, if it was asked of you.—But, Gussy, my beauty, is that you? Miss Wilson, beware—or you will be indicted for woman-slaughter—the girl is muffled up like an Egyptian mummy, all the time longing to escape from the carriage. And


come with the boys to the Lodge to taste my turbot and sirloin, with just one cigar ere we go to bed."

"The boys going with you to eat turbot and smoke on Sundays! for shame, Mr. Selwyn."

"Now, dear Mrs. Western, listen,—the turbot was sent to me yesterday by a friend from Torbay, creamy and delicious; had it been kept till Monday, it would have been uneatable. My first desire, was to send it up to the Hall—but my second thoughts, oftentimes the best, told me it was as well not to allow your cook cause to be dissatisfied with me, knowing she likes her ease on Sundays. As for the sirloin, it is a right good English dish, and the Havannah will end in smoke. So, not being of a selfish disposition, I first abused the good Lingforth for his absurd derelictions from common sense, and then persuaded him to share the turbot and sirloin with the boys; you know we must not waste—that is, waste not, want not—good bye, Gussy, my beauty, half smothered as you are. Now then, Western, most gallant Lord

of Brooklands—a word ere we part. The hounds meet at Allington Gorse to-morrow, a rare covert for sport—and I have long promised the lads a treat, a promise I am bound to fulfil. So I have come over to Church rather ostentatiously in a phaeton and pair, with the sole intention of driving them back to the Lodge, then and there to have a jollification; what say you, Western, to be or not to be—which is the question, or I should rather say, what is your decision? A sirloin and etc. etc.—a warm bed, up by times—breakfast, and tallyho for the ‘Gos,’ as Ploughshare terms it.”


As usual, after a few objections, the Squire’s consent was given, with a promise to send over our hunting costumes, and the horses to covert. And we soon found ourselves in the good-natured Selwyn’s phaeton, Arty and I by his side, with the Doctor and the groom on the seat behind; the distance from Brooklands village to Mr. Selwyn’s Lodge, as he termed it, was barely three miles; and two well-stepping horses trotted over the ground in less than twenty



minutes — when having alighted, we were welcomed into a most cosy bachelor's morning-room, and soon quite at home.

“Now, lads,” said Selwyn, “it wants twenty-five minutes to feeding time—my governess, unlike dear Gussy's, keeps me in order. I dare not be late for dinner a moment, save on hunting days—then I satisfy my appetite as may be. What say you, Lingforth, a glass of sherry, or curaçoa before dinner, which do you prefer, neither? Well, Barton gave us a short but right good sermon—got well into his subject, and quick over his fences—tickled the conscience though at times. So we are at home earlier than usual—I take ten minutes to put off my boots and put on my pantaloons and shoes, to say nothing of ablutions. So come, we have just fourteen minutes and a half to spare, and I always see to the comfort of my horses before I attend to my own. Moreover, I have a new hunter to show you.”

Nothing loath, we followed him to the stable, and truly was it a sight worth be-



holding to those who love the animal horse, and have a passion for field sports. The amiable character of Mr. Selwyn I have already in some measure endeavoured to sketch; he was kind and frank to excess, and generous to a fault. Moreover, a bachelor, though not an old one, and all around him was order and regularity combined with comfort, taste, and elegance. He required alone, a woman he loved, and who loved him well in return, to keep his sporting tastes within bounds, and he would have been apparently the happiest of men, and died in competence, if not riches—instead of a debtor. Why he was a bachelor the sequel will explain. But we now enter the stable yard—as neat as the most fastidious could desire, though possibly somewhat too large either for his wants or his fortune; nevertheless, it was, or rather its contents, the chief object of his existence; and there on non-hunting days, if not in the house, he might always be found.

Picture a somewhat extensive circular roof of sheet-iron resting on pillars, in the


centre of which was a fountain of pure water, forming around it a covered ride suitable for exercising horses during all weathers and in all seasons. This was a curiosity to all the country in those pleasant days, as doubtless it would be so now if it still exists, as was it a most desirable acquisition to the owner of a stud, and might be imitated to advantage. At some distance from this centre ride were ranged the stables, loose boxes and harness rooms, also the veterinary's room and servants' apartments—all as perfect with regard to order and cleanliness, as a well arranged house. The stalls, of which there were twelve, were large, airy, well-ventilated, and commodious—ample room for a horse to turn in, lay down, and exist in perfect comfort; far different from the ill-ventilated cramped pig-stys, intended for the comfort of such noble animals—behind the stalls there was ample room. The rack-chains and head-chains were as bright as silver, whilst here and there against the walls were ranged seats with high backs, on one of which Sel-

wyn passed half his life, admiring his horses; from whence in summer-weather he was wont to change to the edge of the fountain where seated, cigar in mouth, he would watch his favourites at exercise. In truth, could an artist have so beheld him, he would have made an admirable subject for a picture.

The loose boxes were as airy and commodious as the stalls, while all the other departments were well nigh perfect of their kind.

“Here we are, Lingforth,” he exclaimed, as we entered the yard, “what think you of my alterations? Plenty of fresh-water, you observe, and ariated for all I know—at least, my horses drink in the open; here Fred, run to yon door with the brass knocker, and tell my master of the horse, ‘Mr.’ Anderson, as he likes to be termed, though scarcely such a Count as the Brooklands chief, that we desire a view of his live stock ere we try the turbot.”

Now, Mr. Anderson, like many other men who have the care of a hunting stable, had a will of his own—a will, luckily for his



master, that he generally maintained, inasmuch as he was not only an admirable judge of a horse, which his master was not, although a first-rate rider to hounds, but he thoroughly loved the animal. To look at him, you would rather have judged him to have been an extremely neat country lawyer or curate, on small means, than a stud groom, save when on horseback; and then as a boy, at least, I always considered him perfection; as to person, in speech he was as dry as a red herring, and as brief as a flash of lightning—even to those he liked—and as boys, we were his especial favourites. But he now opens the door of his snuggerly and slightly raises his hat—behold a remarkably slight and neat made man, dressed entirely in black, as unlike what is generally supposed to be the costume of a stud groom as may be. What then, save as regards the cut of his coat—he rarely altered it—his trousers were close fitting to the leg, if legs they might be termed—his waistcoat was long even to the hips, while his unpretending coat was somewhat full in the skirts. This was his



Sabbath attire ; on week days it was little changed, save that the black coat gave place to an Oxford grey, which was rather more cut-away. On hunting days, however, when he rode Selwyn's second horse, which he frequently did from pure love of the chase, he sat before you on his hunter as I have already remarked, the very beau ideal of a sportsman. His leather breeches and boots were faultless as to shape and cleanliness, his spurs as bright as silver, his coat still dark, though his buckskins were as white as snow—in fact, had it not been for his cockade, which Selwyn insisted on his wearing, inasmuch as he was a Captain of Yeomanry—and to which he did not object, for with all his dryness he loved his master well—had it not, I say, for this military emblem of honourable servitude—now so desecrated—and always unusual to one in his place, scarcely a man in the field would have passed better muster.

If Anderson's attire was perfect, his small abode was in keeping ; for like his master, he was a bachelor, and liked to have

all things around him in order. Let us enter therein for a few minutes, ere we visit the stud. His sitting room was small, but more than snug. A bright fire burned on the hearth, above the mantel-piece of which there appeared his master's portrait in oils, on Mud-lark, a favourite hunter, whose powers and pace, through a heavy country, were rarely surpassed if equalled, with twelve stone on his back; it must have been a rare horse indeed to have beaten him. An easy arm-chair stood beside the fire-place, additional pictures being arranged around the room, all of a sporting character, and each telling many a tale of flood and field. Books were there also, that is, the Stud Book, the Racing Calendar, Sporting Magazine, White's Farriery, and several other works of a similar character, all however relating to hunting and horses. A pleasant abode, was it not? and well suited to him who dwelt therein—his profession and his wants: horses, hounds, and animals of all sorts were his delight; he lived among them, and literally for them; his knowledge of

their qualities, as their ailments, was also wonderful, and if not contradicted—though given at times to contradict—he was worth far more than his wages, at the head of a stable.


“A tidy box, indeed,” said Lingforth, “and pleasant withal, Mr. Anderson; your specimens of the animals you love so well are also well selected, and well prepared. A curious hoof, indeed, I observe: to what horse may that have belonged? a hole right through the frog, I see. Poor beast! what must have been your sufferings when you received such a wound!”

“You say truly, Sir; his sufferings were indeed severe, but happily soon over. I shot him an hour after the accident happened, though master wept like a child, as well he might at the loss of his favourite—the best horse in our stable; he knew, however, that he was lamed for life, and would suffer none after death. The hounds were running fast across the viaduct Meadows: master wished to take a short cut, and struck down Loucroft-lane, when passing the blacksmith’s,

the 'White Knight'—he was a white horse—dropped at once, and his sport was over for that day. On dismounting, he found a nail had perforated the frog, severed the narticular nerve, and thus went £150, and a first-rate animal."

"But this broken stake," said I, "what of that, Anderson? for you have nothing in your museum, but what tells a tale of the hunting field."

"True, master Fred, true; whoever possesses a good horse, and does not value him, had better part with him at once to those who do. I lived, as you know, Sir, with the Earl of Monkstoun, a true nobleman, and a first-rate sportsman, and 'consequently' an excellent master; he kept a stud such as few ever had the good fortune to cast their eyes on, or ever will again—sixteen of the right sort, all weight carriers—blood and bone. He had one called Tiny, the smallest horse to look at, at first sight, I ever beheld, and yet, when mounted, the largest to handle, and the best to ride in all England; for—which means as regards hunting the world—no moat was too wide, for Tiny—



no run too long—no gate in reason too high. For all that, he met with an accident.

“It was the end of a severe run with the Quorn. A large stake-bound fence right a-head, ground deep and slippery, scent burning, the fox dying, his Lordship was not the man to stop, and Tiny never gave in. But, alas! there was a fatal stake—it entered beneath the thigh, and with such force, as to pass right through to the very flank; for once poor Tiny rolled in the mud. This is the weapon that did the deed; luckily I was at hand on Nunky, another favourite horse of his Lordship’s—but he was not the man to leave a suffering animal, though he was leading the field at the time the accident happened; so together we managed, though with much difficulty, to pull out the stake and staunch the wound. I fancied the poor creature would have bled to death, but I was happily deceived; and he lived to hunt again, though he never afterwards fancied stake-bound fences as well as gates and brooks.”

“And with reason,” said Selwyn, “but

you must relate these tales another day, or the sirloin will be over-roasted, and Mrs. Vaughan will be out of humour for a week, while I shall not see my favourites to-night. Just nine minutes and a-half to spare—come along, Doctor ; come along, boys ; you may shut yourselves up with Anderson for a month at Midsummer, if you will it.”

Now I have already said that Anderson was a man of few words ; and so he was, save and except you managed to catch him in his own sanctum amidst his precious relics of the chase—and then, being once started, nothing could stop him till he ran fairly to the end of his tale. If the selected relic was a brush, and several were there, it was the subject for some splendid run ; a pad for another—a shoe which had been cast for another, and so on.

But the stable-door is thrown aside—no, I am wrong—that of loose box, No. 1—for Selwyn was wise enough never to stall his hunters in the summer season, and consequently had a loose box for every horse—not in field work—and beautiful boxes were

they, airy and commodious. "There's a horse, Lingforth, on the sick list for a day or two, when out few can beat him." And a splendid animal he was, up to fifteen stone, colour dark-brown, of admirable form and figure. We now proceeded to the stable, kept in most perfect order. Stall, No. 1, was empty, but the name of the horse we had just seen was over the manger in white letters, on a black ground, Topthorn. No. 2, was occupied by a grey mare, a great favourite, called the Duchess.

"That is the nag for me," I exclaimed, with boyish admiration.

"And why, Master Fred," drily observed Anderson. "I admire her small head, short legs, and strong back," I replied.

"All good points, Sir, but something more is required for a hunter, look here, Sir."

I looked at No. 3 stall, and observed a horse called Parchment, an ill-formed and apparently ugly roan, at least, so he appeared to me as he stood in the stable. "You are joking," I said, "the horses are not to be compared."

Much you know of the matter, his eye seemed to imply. "May be," he replied, "master rides him to-morrow: and if your new purchase, Friar Tuck, which Bradly so admires, sees his tail twice through the run, which we shall have if this weather lasts—why, Sir, you will learn in future to look at an animal's points more than his beauty."

"What of number four, Copelands, I observe you call him," said Lingforth, "a nice brown horse, and I imagine a fast one."

"Wrong again," said Anderson, "all wrong, Sir, the slowest horse we have in the stud—slow as the town he came from—and that's Hereford; for all that he is a beauty, and so is the county of his birth, and that's Herefordshire. But he is sure, sure as a real friend when found—and no fence can pound him."

No. 5 was a large bony animal, a dark chestnut with white legs, who carried no flesh, and was therefore called Bones.

"There's an animal," said my younger fraternity, "give him to the hounds—I'll have none of him."

"That you won't," replied Anderson, "without Squire Western is prepared to fill up a cheque for a large amount, though Bones he may be called."


"And is not unlike Bonaparte," added his owner, "for nothing will stop him—not even a fence as big as a barricade." And having looked at all his horses, while we were examining these few, he said—"Come, you must look at the rest of my stud another day, it is now getting dark, and our time is up—so tally-ho for the turbot. After dinner I will tell you how I got the animal, Bones, into my stable—from whence I should be sorry to see him depart."

Reluctantly we bid adieu to these noble horses; Mr. Anderson had orders for the morning, and we proceeded to discuss the good cheer so kindly and generously set before us.

CHAPTER XIV.

How many there are who consider, that to be a sportsman, or I will say, a mere lover of hunting horses and hounds, is to be a species of illiterate cigar-smoking, wine-bibbing after dinner, dozing, coarse-talking, immoral, vulgar human being, glorying in the name of Englishman. In other days, such may have been, even now may occasionally be too true.

But I would fain hope, and do most truly believe, such persons are the exceptions to the rule. At all events, my pen speaks of real sportsmen and gentlemen who love hunting — for all the exciting charms which it offers as regards air, exercise on nature's real theatre of enjoyment, and truly more



so, for their love of animals and the noblest horses and dogs. Among such men are to be found the highest in intellect, the truest in heart, the most noble in mind, as the most refined and courteous in manner—men who shoot, hunt, and course, and yet rule the state as the hearts of those of their homes. If Mr. Selwyn was not of the former, truly was he of the latter; for a more thorough or true-hearted gentleman never gave welcome to friends beneath a roof where hospitality and amiability reigned: and much as he loved horses and hunting, still more did he love that those he welcomed to his home should leave it as they ever did, with feelings of friendship for its owner, as of pleasant recollection of its entire comfort and refinement.

There may be some, indeed there are thousands whose tastes, occupations, or necessities, compel them year after year to inhabit great cities, or commercial and manufacturing towns, or even that which is termed a county town; men and women with sense and feeling, who seldom range

beyond the limits of its boundaries. The country and all its endless charms are to them a theory which imagination alone tends to brighten or overcloud. When the sun of summer gladdens all nature, and even the sparrow chirps merrily on the house-tops, then doubtless, many a heart yearns for the cowslip bedecked meads, the glorious woods of old England echoing with the nightingale's thrill, as the thrush and blackbird's melody. They then dream of hay-fields and hay-making as of harvest-homes, and long to verify the truth of the following most touching and simple lines, written by a much esteemed friend, which allude to the fact of having heard the nightingale sing in the day-time :—

“ While brightly thou art glistening,
River, in the sunny ray,
Enchanted I am listening
To the wild bird's gushing lay.

In full, deep notes of sadness,
How she lifts her voice of love,
And seems to chide the gladness
Of the gay birds in the grove.

Bird of the heart, thy singing
Has a thrilling tone for me—
Like angel-harper bringing
Celestial melody.

Whence was that cadence given ?
Didst thou fly on soaring wing
Through the starry paths of heaven,
There to hear the angels sing ?

And thence return to cheer us
With those whisperings of bliss,
Which bring Heaven's brightness near us,
In a world so dark as this.

Just as we on faith's fleet pinion,
Might list before the throne,
To the glory and dominion
Of the Holy Lord alone :


Then back to earth and sorrow,
Chanting, ever night and day,
Of the bright and glorious morrow,
When all grief shall pass away."

But the rigours of winter returned—to
them all the joys of a country life vanish.
The wind howls without, the snow flakes fall
thickly—the bitter frost hardens the earth,
or the pouring torrent soaks it. 'Tis then

they draw closer and closer the thick curtains, heap coals on the already blazing fire, draw nearer and nearer to their hearth's home, and thank God if Christian gratitude has place in their hearts, that they are safe amid the habitations of the multitude protected from the wintry blasts of desolate heaths or woodlands, or to use a practical term, in close proximity, save the partition of a brick wall, to their fellow-men. To such as these, and how many are there, England's smiling plains and hunting grounds have nought of excitement or regret. Hunting to them is a paradox, a thing unknown but in name—and if the word be mentioned, 'tis only to wonder how men can be so mad as to spend their money and risk their lives in jumping over ditches and gates, and what not, after a pack of hounds, instead of sitting comfortably at home—in a smoky city, or a dull provincial town, with duller companions, and their feet on the fender themselves, doing nothing. While shooting is supposed to be equally absurd—a mere waste of powder, shot, and shoe leather—fatiguing to a degree,

sometimes disgustingly wet, at others disagreeably cold : and for what, to kill a hare or two, or a bird or two, which could be purchased in the market for money, and provided by the poulterers. In fact, sport to them is either a cruelty or a madness—loss of time or loss of means. Well, every man to his taste, and God for us all, say I.

Now permit me to introduce you into Mr. Selwyn's withdrawing room ; he stands with his back to a bright fire, and as Englishmen not seldom do, even in the best regulated families, the tails of his coat are a wee bit elevated. While to the right and left of him, in two soft and delightful chintz covered arm-chairs, we brothers sat, admiring his active person, now adorned as gentlemen are generally adorned at the dinner-hour. Lingforth, the worthy Esculapius, half reclines on an ottoman close at hand, reading the newspaper ; while our host pulls down his long white waistcoat, and pulls out his watch. A neat plainly attired servant enters, and announces dinner to the moment ; bravo !



Mrs. Vaughan, no house can be well regulated if cooks do not keep time, or their mistresses lay idling in bed, while the muffins get cold. Now, Fred, tally-ho, the roast beef of old England for ever ; come along, Doctor, beef is better than globutes any day in the week, and more nourishing.

Are you hungry ? no ; well read on, and get an appetite. Yes ; well shut the book and go to luncheon, though it is not a legitimate meal. For now the drawing-room is empty, save from the presence of Eliza the housemaid, who is heaping more coals on the already blazing hearth, and putting things in order.

For the satisfaction of those who imagine a bachelor's home in a hunting county to be a sort of rustic hermitage of disorder and confusion, let me assure them, nothing could be more cheerful than this bright and charming apartment, which looked over the rich vale of Brooklands, from which, as I have already said, it was an easy distance—it was neither large nor lofty. But for all that, it looked as if it had been prepared for the

reception of some loved and loving woman : so elegant and yet so comfortable were all its arrangements.

A light pink and white satin paper adorned the walls, while all the sofas, ottomans, chairs, and couches were covered, pattern in chintz to match—over the white marble mantel-piece a Venetian framed glass was placed, while all the additional ornaments were in keeping ; and, though winter-time, some flowers were there—fine proof that a sportsman is not even so rough in his tastes as some would give him credit for. Opening into this room was a delightful oak-panelled small library, filled with well selected books ; and all the remainder of the house, from attic to cellar, was equally agreeable and unpretending. Such was a sportsman's home, and such may still be found, where the presence of fair woman adds to it graces.

The dear old Squire of Brooklands was everlastingly joking our friend Selwyn on the subject of his truly pleasing and elegant home. But in later days it was one of pain, on which I shall hereafter dwell, and the

moment it became so, it was for ever dropped. I fancy even now I see my dear old Dad sitting in that very room, the evening previous to a favourite meet with the Earl's hounds within a few miles of the Lodge; he had come there at the express wish of Selwyn; to dine and sleep, as Selwyn said, to meet a few friends, as a house warming—for his home had then been recently embellished. There he sat in a luxurious arm-chair, awaiting the announcement of dinner, admiring the room, and good-humouredly joking with all around him.

"By St. Hubert, Charley, my boy," familiarly addressing Selwyn, "you have a rare taste for upholstery, as well as for hunting—who suffers, Dowbiggin or Gillow—a rare combination of colours and comfort, I must admit, aye; I fancy there is truth in the village gossip, and petticoats in the distance, and no mistake."

"In the distance, indeed," said Selwyn, "but not here as yet."

"Well, well, Charley, I wish you all happiness in your choice: select a good wife

—love her as well as you do the noble animals in your stable, and she will have no reason for discontent. But, mark you, this is a home fit for a queen.”

“Not too good for her I shall select, if I have the good fortune to get one at all, Western.”

And this, with such an absence of merriment in his face, that, boy that I was, it struck me there must be something, as my Dad had humourously said, in the distance; and so it proved, to the undying sorrow of poor Selwyn, who but for that might have lived to read these lines, and to know how deeply I felt for him, and how truly I esteemed him, both in my early years and afterwards as a man.

But dinner is announced, so let us peep into the dining-room — most truly was it perfection of comfort; a bright Christmas fire blazed on the hearth, the dark curtains were closely drawn, and the lights burned brilliantly in the centre of a round table laid for four, but at which eight might conveniently have dined. The sides of this

room, chiefly embellished by well-executed paintings of favourite horses and sporting incidents, while over the fire-place appeared the gallant host's portrait on Parchment, taking Low Bottom Brook in his stride—twenty-four feet from bank to bank—and thus, with the exception of two others, pounding the whole field. Around this table we sat with light hearts and good appetites. On the right of Selwyn a dumb waiter, now seldom used, was seen, his only in-door servant being in attendance. A splendid turbot was placed on the board with lobster-sauce, fit for so fresh a turbot—with potatoes, such as I grieve to think are almost gone from the land we live in.

“Now,” said our hospitable entertainer, after we had done double duty to the fish—“try that sherry—people say it is tolerable, judge for yourselves, young fellows; and do you, Lingforth, tell me what you think of it—come no homœopathy to-night—drink like a man—no good wine in moderation can hurt any one.” Lingforth did drink and pronounced the wine excellent. The turbot

was removed, and replaced by a sirloin : such as Gloucestershire and its neighbouring county, Herefordshire, can produce, while a roast pheasant was also added to the good cheer; and we once more set-to in good earnest.

“ Now,” said Selwyn, “ a roast pheasant and a roast sirloin, are not, I fancy, according to the order of things, and Mrs. Vaughan rebelled—but I am not a second-course man, and I prefer game to meat. A turbot and pheasant with a bottle of claret, such as I hope to offer you, is a dinner fit for an Emperor—if not, for an Alderman, what say you ?” And thus passed a pleasant and excellent repast, well cooked, well served, and given with all generous hospitality. Some Stilton and a rampion, we drew our chairs around the fire, and with many a hope expressed for a good run on the morrow, and many a tale of horse and hound, which I must leave for the next Chapter, we lads drank lightly and went to bed—but scarcely to sleep—if so, surely we dreamt of the coming sport.

CHAPTER XV.

THE excellent and agreeable dinner over, to which we did ample justice, much to the satisfaction of our host, who having not a particle of selfishness in his whole heart, loved to see his guests enjoy themselves ; we drew, as I have said, our chairs around the fire, and a pleasant evening commenced.

“ Now, Doctor,” exclaimed Selwyn, “ I give you joy, you are a man again—on my life I was fancying all dinner-time you would reject either turbot or sirloin, at all events the lobster-sauce as inconsistent with the homœopathic system of digestion ; but in good truth you played your part right well,

and heartily glad was I to see you do so. Having, however, done your duty by the dinner, follow up the charge and taste this claret—drink a bottle, or a half dozen if you like—and you will sleep soundly, and by St. Hubert, or I am much mistaken, we shall have you out with the hounds to-morrow; aerated water I have none in the house, though there is plenty of brandy and spring-water at your command. By the bye, it has just occurred to me to ask you a question; were I to put a wig on and announce myself to the world as a barrister, what would the legal profession say? In like manner I do not understand how the medical profession, men who have spent money and years of toil to gain even a tolerable footing in their calling, should submit to be hustled by quacks. Are there no legislators prepared to ask the question of right or wrong, or are we all so benighted as to be ever searching for some novelty, even at the risk of our lives?"

"I do not admit the quackery," replied Lingforth, "homœopathy is a new era in

the science of medicine, which will sooner or later rise in the estimation of the public or fall, according to its merits. Practical surgeons, however, we must still have, but I fancy the skill of the one may be blended with the science of the other, and with qualified men it would be no quackery."

"Well, well, there is something reasonable in what you say, but here, taste this bottle, and for the future eschew humbuggery."

While we cracked our walnuts and swallowed the cool claret,—sipped, is not the word—a most agreeable pastime, Selwyn proposed to give us an account of the manner in which he had become possessed of two of his horses. "Bones, for instance, the horse which when the ground is light, few can beat either as to pace or distance; and should it be heavy, what then, he can live as long as most of them. Well, I got him for a trifle, but it is not a trifle would part us. You know I have a small property on the borders of the Severn—it consists chiefly of water meadows, and is let to a grazier, old Tom Norton by name—a jolly old fellow, in

fact, who loves a mug, a pipe and a joke, as well as any man in all England. When the weather sets in hard, I frequently go down to his farm in order to have a shot at the wild-fowl which there abound, and generally terminate the day's sport with a good hearty luncheon at old Tom's, as we call him, who has orders to write me a line when the ducks are plentiful ; so accordingly, I received one morning the following laconic epistle.

“ Dere Muster Selvin,

“ The Dukes be comed by hindrids—please come down yerself, and shut a few on 'um. There bees also some Guses, and a swarm o' snipes. Missus ar got a noice soid or beacon as ever you seed, and we is about to kill a porker, so you'll ha chitlings, black puddins, and a grisken. Your expecting humble servant,

TOM NORTON.”

“ This charming letter, together with a severe bleak frost, decided me to pass a morning with the ‘ Dukes’ and ‘ Guses.’ So accordingly I started for the marshes well provided with guns and ammunition ; no sooner arrived there, however, than a thaw commenced, as soft and as rapid as the frost

had been severe and apparently lasting ; and as you well know I never by any chance fail to meet the hounds when possible, I determined not to linger. However, I had a fair day's sport, bagged two couple and a half of ducks, one gander, a few couple of snipes, and a hunter—not a bad day, was it—to say nothing of the griskin and some admirable black-puddings, the produce of the bacon-pig, which Tom had slaughtered in honour of my visit, and much to the gratification of my inward man. Luncheon over, I ordered my dog-cart, with the intention of returning home—and having lighted a cigar, and handed another to Tomaso, who said, 'he'd ha none such,' as he preferred a clay and birds-eye, we walked out into his straw yard in order to see a handsome young bull which he had recently purchased. As we were admiring the animal, I heard a whistle and then a shout, and conceive my astonishment at beholding a dark chestnut horse clear the gate with a bound like an antelope, and land without effort within a few yards of where we were standing.

Seated on his back was a jolly fat butcher, weighing full fourteen stone, dressed in a full-sleeved shirt of true blue."

"A right good horse, and a plucky rider," I said, "and no mistake: Butcher, who taught him to jump; and what may be his pedigree?"

"Pedigree, Zur," he replied, "what may that be? I never heard the word afore."

"Well, may be so, good man; in plain terms, then, what horse was his father—what mare his mother!"

"Oh, you wants to know about his birth and parentage; well, as far I know, Sir, his dad was Woltigeur by a wexatious animal, and his mother were a thorough bred, belonging to Lord Hexeter. I am told he be true bred; but all I know, Sir, is, that I took him for a debt, and nare an horse I knows of can beat him in jumping, galloping or trotting, though I am not a feather weight, am I, Sir?"

"No, indeed," I replied, laughing, "without it be a feather bed, blanket, and bedstead—all together." This he took very good

humouredly, when I added, "In truth, you sat your colt over that gate in a manner which ought at once to secure you the knighthood of the marrow-bones and cleavers, though, forsooth, knighthoods are no great honour as they are now disposed of. But tell me something more of the gallant chestnut."

"Well, Sir; I took him, as I told you, in payment of a debt; and my missus took him into her affections, doubtless because he were so thin, whereas I am somewhat lusty, as you perceive; and some how or another, though, when we were a courting she said she admired a man what carried flesh, and could not abide the lean kind, she has much changed of late, and frequently now declares that I really be like a Lord Mayor, pertikerly on a hot day, when I wastes a little."

"Does she, indeed; well that's not pleasant," I observed; "but I perceive you are rather lusty. What then, doubtless your appetite is good."

"That is it," he exclaimed; "and so is

my meat of its kind. But the horse—I gave him to my missus for her own pertikeler riding. And she did ride him a time or two—once to Church, and once to market, and so forth ; but he were too much for her, so I determined to sell him, and he is now for sale.”

On this I examined him well, and at once observed that, although he was in miserable condition, that his eye was clear, his constitution apparently good, his legs free from blemish, and a five-year old ; and although not precisely the horse I prefer, I felt he would be altogether another animal in my stable. But I held my tongue on that point, and shewed no disposition to purchase.

“So he was too much for your missus, was he butcher ? How so ?”

“Why you see, Sir. She had some heggs which she was a carrying to market ; the morning was cold, and she had mounted Woltigeur, with a large cloak on, which I thinks tickled him behind at times ; then there was a basket of heggs on one side, with fowls a cackling and ducks a quacking

on the other. So as she was going down Gunner's Hill, she put her hand on the crupper, to hold on, you see; and as she did so he kicked hup behind. The first kick were nothing of a kick, merely a raise of the posterity—I mean posterior—but she clung tighter and tighter, and then the horse kicked up behind with a vengeance, and kicked my missus clean over his head into the mud, dislokated the ducks, determined some of the poultry, and smashed the heggs to smithereens.

“After this she vowed she would not ride the horse again, nor would she keep any more poultry, or have any more heggs, or have any more to do in the farming line, but stick to a fat pony, crotchiting, and butchering, the two latter quite fashionable, aint they, Sir?

“But as I said before, Squire Selvin, for I knows your name, Sir, as this is your land; the animal's for sale.”

“Well, butcher, I want a horse at a low price for hack work, and may be yours might suit me, notwithstanding his pro-

pensity to kick up behind ; so name your figure, and if reasonable we may deal."

"All right. I am a straight forward and fairish sort of a man, as times go. No gammon about me. You have seen some of the animal's good qualities, Sir ; and I don't look for any great market ; a pound or two more than I gave for him, and he is yours ; twenty pounds was the money he cost me, say twenty-two, and he is yours ; more, as he came into the yard, so shall he go out of it—over that gate."

"Well, your demand is not an unfair one ; however, twenty pounds is about the mark, but to put the matter on a fair footing, ride him over the gate again. If he land safe on the other side, I will toss you up, twenty or two-and-twenty, and pay you on the spot."

"Done, Sir ; it's a bargain," he replied, and forthwith he mounted, charged, and went clean over the gate, again jumping safely some yards beyond it.

"So far you have gained your money,"

I said, "now then," spinning a half-crown in the air, "heads or tails."

"Woman for ever," he cried, laughing loudly.

"And woman it is," I replied, "His Majesty's head, and no mistake; may it long be the coin of the realm." And forthwith I entered Tom Norton's house, and gave him a cheque for the amount. The horse became mine, and an admirable beast he has proved. I mounted a lad I had brought with me in the dog cart on his back; he shewed no disposition to kick, and I drove home well satisfied with my bargain."

"A lucky purchase, indeed," chimed in Lingforth, "indeed a rare horse in the field, but it is seldom, I fancy, that you suit yourself for such a price."

"Rarely, rarely, I assure you; there is but one other horse in my stable that cost me less than a hundred. That one became mine under far different circumstances truly, and for one tenth the sum, and yet I have ridden him for three seasons without one fall, but to select his country—stone walls cannot be

too high for him, or they are no longer stone walls, a deep country can only subdue him, and few are the horses that it will not subdue. But you have had enough of horses for to-night. No. Well, then, ring the bell, Fred, and let us have one more bottle of claret, a cigar, with something hot, and then prepare by a good night's rest for the run of to-morrow."

The bell was rung, the claret was placed on the table, we filled our glasses—somewhat precocious for Eton boys, I hear some one say—and Selwyn proceeded to tell us how he had obtained the Parson:—

"I had gone down to visit a friend in a fair vale of Devon, as he termed his locality in Devonshire, during the dead season—peaches ripe—thermometer at 80°, bathing machines in full employment, and young ladies donkey riding mad.

"It was a pleasant abode, amid roses and blooming myrtles—he had a fair and charming wife, and moreover was a sportsman, and given to hospitality—so he gathered friends around him at his beautiful home;

and, although hunting there was none, and the weather was hot enough to fry bacon, we got on however pleasantly and merrily enough. On one occasion there dined at St. Michael's, better had it been called St. Myrtle's, among others a country curate, a young man fresh from Oxford, and, to do him justice, a most agreeable companion. But he had committed a great and irretrievable mistake in life, or his parents had done so for him, in as much as having completed an University education, that is, learnt a little Latin, and imbibed considerable sporting tastes—he had taken orders instead of purchasing a commission in the heavy dragoons, and was now performing the duties of an aged parson, who preferred passing the latter days of his life on the eight hundred a-year which he received in tithes, for doing nothing, while my young acquaintance received the remaining eighty, for doing every thing. His pastor and master was an aged, florid, amiable clergyman of the old school, who looked on a Bishop in lawn sleeves as heathens do on a golden idol, preached

short, and, as he believed orthodox sermons, was kind to his parishioners, and loved a good bottle of port, and a nap after dinner; whether he did much good as a parish priest, I will not presume to say—enough that he did little harm, and as things went this is much in his favour. He gave occasionally to the poor, including the Methodists, as all were then termed who thought fit to pray to God elsewhere but in a church—and, although he professed to hate them, he did not persecute them. Such was the man to whom the young curate had bound himself, mentally and physically, for fourscore pounds per annum. But, as I have said, he or his worthy papa had totally mistaken his place in the race to California; no man that I ever cast my eyes on was more fitted than was Curate Longfellow, for by such name the residents in the neighbourhood humourously termed him, for a heavy dragoon—of the genii sporting. *Imprimis*: He stood six feet one without his shoes, had arms that would have wielded a sabre like a wand, and legs far more formed to mount a powerful

hunter, or a heavy dragoon horse, than a pulpit—moreover, his countenance was bright and open as a May morning, and withal he had a heart which scarce belied the expression of his face. Had his Rector lived till later days, he would doubtless have had a leaning towards Rome and Romanists, fasted on Fridays on cod-fish and oyster-sauce, omelets and artichokes. But he died, good man, previous to the Era Pusyandos, and happily for himself as his parishioners, ere the Tractarian sword flashed from the scabbard to do battle among heretics. Unluckily for poor Longfellow he swore to the Thirty-nine Articles at the very period when the first wax candle was lighted, as the signal for war to the knife among churchmen. And being an enthusiast in every thing he undertook—and, to do him justice, I believe an honest one, if not wise, in his enthusiasm—he charged home (mentally) at once into the thick of the Tractarian advancing columns, and planted the standard of Evangelism on the weathercock of his parish church. The wind, however, did not ever

blow to the east or to the west, according to his wishes or those of his flock. And at length he found out, as many better men have done, that extremes in all things are odious and hateful, and so he sat himself down, as he should have done at first, and preached as he practised—Christian moderation and charity.

“However, I am going from my point, and talking of priests instead of horses; help yourself, Lingforth—good, is it not? ‘First-rate, but I have had enough.’ Nonsense, finish the bottle, while I finish my story. ‘Well, there is no resisting such claret as this.’ Bravo! Doctor, bravo!

“But talking of the Parson—the horse not the curate—though I must make the latter speak of the former. At the period when we met, he was a first-rate enthusiast, and would have parted with the hair off his head in the cause where fancied duty led him; in fact, like a man mounted on a pulling horse, who charges a wall against his will, and finds himself in a gravel-pit on the other side. He was for putting down

all things at once, and taking up others equally hastily for conscience sake. His first struggle was to subdue his passion for sporting—possibly the last he might have retained in moderation. His guns were sold in fear that he might be induced to accept an invitation for a few days' shooting. His fishing rods and flies were given away; and lastly his horses, heretofore the pleasure of his life, and pride of his existence, were sold. Thus the poor fellow reasoned by acting, for he was true and firm as steel, when he thought he was right.

“‘It is not well for a parson to hunt,’ he would say—‘hitherto I have kept my horses as a duty: the parish is large, and I have two churches to attend; but I must part with them—a pony will do the work, and keep me out of temptation.’

“Nonsense, I replied; if you can afford to keep them, why not—air and exercise are as healthful and necessary to a clergyman as any of us; and if you do take a look at the hounds occasionally, what then.

“‘Hounds!’ he exclaimed—‘I own the

passion I once had for the chase; but what has hunting to do with preaching or teaching the Gospel, this is my duty—and hunting I must give up, though I see little harm in the noble pastime, when other duties do not interfere.’”

“Well, well, it evinced firmness of character, and more, an excellent spirit,” said Lingforth.

“And both had he in an eminent degree. But to terminate my tale. I met him a few mornings subsequent to the dinner-party at St. Michael’s, riding a nice looking grey, which however appeared to go somewhat tenderly under his weight—he pulled up, and we shook hands. A neat hack, I said, is it one of those you desire to part with?

“‘Precisely so,’ he observed, ‘I was on my way to St. Michael’s to show him to you, knowing your love for the animal, horse. As I do not desire a high price, it may suit you.’

“Permit me to handle him, Parson,” I said, examining his points, “and with your permission I will just try him round yon

meadow, and over those hurdles; can he fence?"

"‘You are perfectly welcome,’ he replied, ‘poor beast, he is an admirable fencer, though I fancy rather unsound just at present; how he became so I know not, for within the last week he was perfectly sound. However, the sum I ask for him will, I trust, put him into hands who will cure him.’ On this I mounted, galloped steadily round a large deep fallow field, over a rather awkward fence, and then over the hurdles. The horse went well, and jumped admirably. On dismounting, I perceived at once that the lameness was caused by a disease termed greasy heels—painful to the animal, but not incurable. A nice little horse, and a free goer, I observed, but a hack and hurdle jumper is not precisely the animal for high stone walls and brooks. What is your demand?"

"‘Try him at any fence you like,’ he replied, ‘the more cramped and difficult, the more steadily will he jump. He stands a trifle above fifteen hands; look at his

back, and loins, and legs, and above all at my length and weight.' Here he became animated as he described a run with Mr. Trelawny's hounds, in which he had figured as one of the leading men, over the hills of Dartmoor, and across one of the most impracticable vales of Devon, whither he had been carried without a single mistake, at best pace. 'You ask his price; I do not warrant him, and all I require is a pony.'

"Well, that's no large sum at all events, unsound though he be; no man can lose by giving twenty-five pounds for such a horse who can ride him with hounds."

"'Twenty-five pounds,' he exclaimed, 'who said any such sum? not I. But I am no longer a sporting character, and forget that in sporting phraseology a pony means pounds. I literally mean a pony; I want, in fact, a quiet animal to carry me to church, and around my parish. And if you will select me one the horse is yours.'

"Are you in earnest, Longfellow."

"'Decidedly, Squire.' Such was the conversation that passed between us.

"I need scarcely add that I accepted the horse on such terms, sent him the following day into Gloucestershire, where he was soon cured and christened, and has proved as good a horse as he was said to be. However, it was not so easy to find a suitable pony; for I was desirous to obtain a thoroughly good one, and would have given willingly twenty-five pounds; however, one turned up which pleased him much in his own neighbourhood, so he wrote to me, and demanded ten pounds, which was forthwith sent.

"And now, boys, to bed; no smoking, youngsters, whatever you do at Eton; that I have faithfully promised Western; breakfast on the table at eight—I need scarcely add to the moment. Lingforth come to my sanctum; you have proved to be the man I thought you. The moon shines brightly, no danger on your road home."

CHAPTER XVI.

AT a pleasant spot where the roads meet which lead from two not unimportant market towns of Gloucestershire, almost in the centre of a noble Duke's hunt—well and deservedly esteemed for his courtesy and amiable bearing alike to high and low, rich and poor—the traveller will pass through the retired and not unpicturesque village of Yatcombe, at least, by such name I shall speak of it. Like most other rural villages, ere the advent of railways changed the face of the country, it was little, perhaps never heard of save by the immediate inhabitants of the neighbour-

hood, or the members of the hunt, and to those solely from its being one of the localities where the hounds occasionally met. It had little to recommend it, either as regards position or peculiar beauty. An ancient church, overshadowed by some equally ancient elm trees, a public house, the residences of a few farmers, and sundry cottages, together with a turnpike almost in the centre of the village, at the meeting of the roads, was all it could boast of—quite sufficient for the requirements of its limited circle. Ere the church clock had sounded the hour of ten, however, on a fair hunting morning of January, 18—, it presented a scene of unusual bustle and excitement. Had an artist been there well might his pencil have been used in portraying the various groups of horses and men who had assembled. The principal and decidedly the most interesting party, however, were gathered together in an open space in front of the humble hostelry—then called the Foxhound, but now, I fancy, the Punch-bowl—with an inscription under-

neath the sign, doubtless from the pen of the landlord :—

“Whoever is a thirsty, and travels ~~this~~ here way,
Is right welcome for to drink, if quite ready for to pay.”

The group consisted of a young and lovely woman, warmly, yet elegantly clad, who half-reclined in a well-built phaeton, drawn by two beautiful white ponies, with flowing manes and tails, set off to advantage by their neat black harness ; of these ponies she held the reins, while a perfectly attired groom boy, with the bridle of a handsome thorough-bred horse he had been riding thrown around his arm, stood at their heads. By her side were two of the most interesting and beautiful children I ever beheld ; the one a little blue-eyed girl about five years old, who laughed and chattered with delight at the animated scene around her ; while the dark eyes of her brother, who was probably some two years older, seemed to flash and sparkle with excitement at the scene, as in expectation of the arrival of the hounds. But I was known to them, and loved them

well, and possibly in my eyes they were perfection. Near to this carriage were several horsemen, some mounted, others dismounted, the majority in the blue uniform of the hunt, while others wore the truly English sporting costume, scarlet. There was no mistaking them or the position to which they belonged—they were gentlemen—not exhibiting the slightest foppery or eccentricity of costume, while their horses evinced as much high breeding as themselves.

Close by the carriage, with his hand on the shoulder of the young girl, stood a grey-haired, aristocratic man, attired in the hunt costume. While near him sat gracefully, on horseback, a young man whose coming moustache pronounced him, in those days when such military distinction was not the vogue among shop-boys and lawyers' clerks, an officer of the household cavalry or hussars, others were scattered here and there. Dog-carts and phaetons drove into the village from the two roads; men were dismounting from their hacks, and mounting their hunters; great coats were thrown aside to

grooms ; farmers on every species of horse, and men of every position, as on every sort of animal, from the neighbouring and adjacent cities, thronged the village thoroughfare, and blocked up the road—in fact, it was a delightful hunting morning, and, above all, the hounds were to draw Allington Gorse. True to the appointed time, half-past ten, only a few minutes sooner,—following our Dad, who was mounted on Corbeau, and Mr. Selwyn, on Parchment—I on the new horse, Friar Tuck, with Arty on Silver-tail, the horses having been sent on the previous evening to a friend's house in the neighbourhood—we rode into the village. As we approached the carriage, the little boy exclaimed, “Mama, mama, here comes Squire Western on Corbeau ;” and, as the lady held out her hand to welcome my father, Mr. Selwyn, and my brother, and I, were greeted by the assembled group—

“Bravo !” said one, “here is Western and his boys all the way from Brooklands, we must have sport. How are you, lads—how are you, Selwyn ? A new horse, by St.

George, Fred, where did your father get him? Parchment, I see, Selwyn; well you are come in force to do battle with the Duke's men. What sport in the Earl's country since the frost broke, aye?" And then the merry joke and hearty laugh went round, till the voice of the bright-eyed boy exclaimed, "The hounds, the hounds." And he who has led them to death and victory over many a well fought field, touching his cap as he passed the assembled horsemen, passed on through the village at the head of as splendid a pack of hounds as ever were cheered o'er the vales of merry England. The rear was brought up by two well-mounted whips, when a cavalcade of more than one hundred horsemen closed in and followed in their track. After this body of cavalry came the pony-carriage, escorted by several well-mounted gentlemen, among whom our own party numbered—and I witnessed on that day a larger number of fine horses in the hunting-field than I ever recollect before or since, never having the good fortune to visit Melton.

For two miles we jogged along merrily on the high road ; when, turning into a grass-field bordered by a spinny of willows, the huntsman marshalled his forces ready for the fray, and awaiting his Commander-in-chief, the Duke of Gloucestershire. Brief was the time we had to wait, ere his Grace, accompanied by two well-dressed and well-known Leicestershire men, drove up at a rapid pace. And having cordially greeted the Lord of Brooklands, as he familiarly termed him, for well were such men suited, he then gave the word to the huntsman, who touched his cap, and in another minute every hound was in the spinny ; possibly this draw was unnecessary, but on the principle of a good general, who never leaves an enemy in the rear—doubtless he was right.

Alas ! as I now write, and the memory of other days come o'er me, how unwisely I feel myself lingering on the past, instead of thanking God for the blessings and joys of the present. But the world which I knew not was then all before me—so bright and beautiful, so happy and apparently unselfish,

that I own I could not then believe that man could be man's most bitter enemy, more revengeful in his animosity than the tiger of Southern Africa; but a nearer contact in after life with human nature has taught me a lesson, soon learnt by most men after they quit that which they conceive to be the source of all life's miseries—the school-room. Then comes the knowledge, that filthy lucre, which means pure gold, is sought after more ravenously by man than the wolf seeks the midnight prey; and filthy lucre though it be, it snaps asunder the purest friendships, breaks the most noble hearts, and subdues the highest mental powers—and so will it while man is man, and the world remains.

Avaunt such thoughts as these, they recur to mind more forcibly when I think of the once happy Brooklands; but the huntsman's horn sounds cheerily, and dashing out of the spinny, followed by the whole pack, he trots on speedily to a covert at hand.

“I thought we were going to Allington Gos,” said Ploughshare; rolling by on his all but thorough-bred, touching his hat.

"And so we are Ploughshare," I cried out, "but the Duke has ordered Breinton Wood to be first tried."

"Well, well, Sir—two hunts are better than one, that's fact—but how do you like the new horse, Friar Tuck, as you calls him."

"I have not tried him yet, Ploughshare, but I will soon tell you — for there goes Mermaid, one of the best hounds of the pack into the covert—and if the varmint be there, we shall soon have to ride our best."

Ye sportsmen and sporting men, have you ever been on the field of battle and heard the first cannon roar, or the first shot whistle harmlessly over your head? have you ever numbered among a gallant corps that have charged home into the ranks of a foreign foe? have you ever listened for the sound of the approaching footsteps of one well-loved, from whom you have been long parted; or being low in cash have held in your hand an unopened letter from your banker, whom you have asked for an advance? Knowing that his refusal will place you in a painful position,

or his acquiescence in a most agreeable one. If I say you have ever experienced any of these heart-beatings, I tell you they are scarcely more exciting than that which you feel at the moment of hearing a well-known hound give tongue in a favourite covert, being mounted on a first-rate hunter with an open country before you. And doubtless, many were the heart-beatings as this hound's melodious voice echoed through the wood, followed by a wild halloo in the right direction, which announced that the foe had fled.

Boy as I was, I thought in those days that there was no man like the well-loved Lord of Brooklands, as that no horse in all England could beat Corbeau with his master on his back—and with the exception of the horse being really the best in England, God bless his memory—through life that opinion has never wavered. Where he rode, therefore, I felt I could not do better than ride also—I well knew that neither horse nor rider would refuse either fence or brook that was practicable. But I shall not dwell on

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G.W. MORLUP.

this run—sharp, short, and decisive as it was, inasmuch as I have to account for the death of as gallant a fox, afterwards found in Allington Gorse, as ever stood before hounds; affording a run equal to any it was ever my good fortune to witness, or even to read of in sporting history—a fox which yielded up his life to his pursuers, in the centre of another hunt—as day was closing into night. Enough, that I saw my Dad turn sharp to the right, and get well over a deep drop into a grass-field, followed by Selwyn on Parchment, and the young man I have mentioned with mustachios, who has since distinguished himself alike in the Senate as in his profession—while the body of the hunt went right a-head. And I said to myself, “If Dad is right, I shall be right, and we shall have the best of it—if Dad is wrong, so will be Selwyn, two good men and true—and I shall lay the blame on them for having led me astray.” But I was right—Squire Western was rarely out in his judgment; the Friar took the fence, which was an awkward one, admirably—and

immediately after me Ploughshare floundered into the field, dashing by, as were he riding for the Derby; and sending a clod of mud into my eye, that well nigh blinded me for the remainder of the day, crying out, "Come along, Master Fred, the Squire always knows a fox's point, and we have done the whole field." For once he was correct. The judicious line selected by my father and Selwyn, shewed their knowledge of hunting; and so, after jumping a light fence into a muddy lane, we soon found ourselves riding literally at full speed across an extensive common. The pace indeed was such, that neither hounds nor horses could have continued it for half an hour, and I soon found as I gained ground on Parchment and Corbeau, and had returned the compliment to Ploughshare, whom I bespattered—that my light weight was telling advantageously, and that our new horse, the Friar, was a fast one and a trump. Indeed, the hounds were running as fast as hounds could go, and we had shaken off by the lucky turn the entire field. A big wall at the end of a

ploughed field, which was unusually deep and sticky, from the recent frost, was right a-head. Over went the hounds followed by Selwyn, now leading—Corbeau took it at a higher point, and I endeavoured to follow him—but the ground was knee-deep, and being evidently not well accustomed to walls, the Friar would not have it. In the meantime, Ploughshare came on like a steam-engine, and as his horse faced it boldly, they might have got over—but he rolled in his saddle, and lifted his whip and shouted, as had he been placed in the field to frighten away the crows—and the gallant beast unequal to such a heavy pendulum on his back, swerved and struck the wall, which was a tolerable stiff one; and horse, horseman, as a portion of the wall, floundered into the next field. This let the Friar through, as it left Ploughshare amid some turnips—but the hounds had come to a momentary check, which enabled me to catch them again, as did it also bring up the huntsman and a few of the best men who

had raced the whole run. From this point to the finish, it was brilliant—with many a difficult fence to surmount—but the gallant fox was doomed to die and die he did, by the side of a small covert which he had in vain endeavoured to reach, with few to witness his demise—for the pace was such, that those who had made the first mistake, never could fairly catch the hounds, with the exception of the few named. The noble owner of the pack, however, appeared ere the fox was broken up, and expressed his entire satisfaction at the manner in which his beautiful pack had done their duty.

“Just thirty-eight minutes from find to kill, your Grace,” said the huntsman. “Here, Master Fred, is a pad. Had it not been Friday, the Friar would have jumped that wall, and you would have fairly gained the brush. Mr. Western has won too many in his day to wish for more; and Mr. Selwyn, who went well throughout the run, wishes a brush from his Grace’s country for Anderson’s Sporting Museum.”

"Why, Ploughshare," said another farmer, riding up, "your cords be a bit bespattered, I take it."

"I judge they are," he replied, good-humouredly, "and so would yours have been, had you rolled in that ere turnip field." But now for Allington Gorse.

CHAPTER XVI.

TOWARDS Allington we rode right joyously ; horses that were in good condition suffered little from the first short run, though, in truth, it was a fast one. Those who had second horses in the field, then rarely the case, mounted them ; those who had not rode steadily along, and nursed their noble beasts, as good sportsmen will do.

We traversed lanes, which in summer-time would have been cool and shady ; in spring bedecked with the primrose and the violet ; thence through the park of one, who, in his home as in the senate, has justly gained for himself the title of the people's

friend—one of those aristocrats so noble in their conduct—so generous in their actions—so just in their opinions and dealings, that were every Peer of the Realm such as he, truly would the aristocracy of England be England's surest safeguard, spite all said to the contrary. I never looked on his possessions, beautiful as they were, without thinking how blessed the man must be who owned them, and yet knew how to perform the duties of his stewardship. As the people who lived under him, and felt the effect of that stewardship in the knowledge that he who was their Lord was likewise their friend; and fully admitted by his conduct that the rights of property have some higher aim than Self.

But the anxious and excited cavalcade pass onwards through the Lodge Gates, held aside by an aged woman, who curtsies, and receives a good-day from his Grace the Duke. While I find jogging by my side one of two brothers well known in the hunt, who were considered admirable horsemen; and to do them justice men of such unconscious tact,

although not precisely in the position of gentlemen, though very much so in their conduct in the hunting field at least, that I never could deny to them a most just appreciation,—perfectly dressed, remarkably well mounted, without intrusion, bluster, or apparent desire for observation. When the hounds were running, they were ever in a forward place; and when not running, they held converse with one and another of the field in a quiet and unpretending manner, but with a true knowledge of horse and hound, as of the character of man.

Their name was Harewood, not an unsporting one. Whether they belonged to the Lascelles family or not, I cannot say, and never enquired. Like the rest of us, however, I conclude they were descendants of Adam, and as they rather raised human nature by their conduct in my young estimation, I desired to know no more.

“Good morning, Master Fred,” said the elder, as he rode up to my side with unsplashed boots, and leathers as white as snow. “I hear you would have beaten the

whole field in the last run, but for the heavy ground near a large wall. A nice horse indeed you are riding, but when did the Brooklands stables hold a bad one?"

"You are correct as regards your latter remark," I replied, laughing; "but not exactly so as regards my performance in the run. I followed old Corbeau, whose rider rarely mistakes the proper fence to jump, while the field made a wrong turn, or, more properly speaking, the fox did, as far as they were concerned. Were you among the unlucky ones?"

"I was, and I was not. In fact I was delayed this morning, and consequently lost the whole chase. But we shall find in the Gorse I have no doubt; and so far I am lucky, for my horse is fresh."

"If so, I shall follow you, Mr. Harewood; for you know the country well, but do not lead me into a scrape, and I promise not to ride over you."

"Agreed, sir; yet, mark me, we are in for a clipper—but you must first taste Farmer Slowboy's ale, and a crust of bread

and cheese will do you good." This he said as he drew up at a large farmhouse, where almost the whole field had gathered. Plough-boys were leading horses, others were tied up, the stables and the house was filled, in fact—the one with hungry quadrupeds, the other with hungry bipeds. Accordingly, nothing loath, I dismounted, and following Mr. Harewood, entered a rather spacious room, in the centre of which was an immense round table, covered with cheeses and cold beef, hams, and loaves in abundance—beer was there also in gallons, wine, brandy, and rum—butter and bacon; in truth, the man who gave, gave bountifully and generously, and those that ate, ate heartily and unsparingly; in fact,

“ Whole barons of beef were cut down, sir—
Demolished into the back-bone, sir,”

At this truly English offering, appropriately termed a matutinal feast to St. Hubert.

At the moment we entered, the good-natured host was pressing a bottle of jump-

ing water, if pressing was required, on the attention of those assembled around King Arthur's table, for such one of the company had termed it—when, Harewood having whispered something into his ear, he turned round, and said, "Welcome, most welcome, young sir: be dad, here's your brother," as Arty came in, "you are most welcome also—the sons of as good a landlord and sportsman as the county can produce; though, may be you belong to the Earl's hunt rather than his Grace's—what then, fox-hunters are fox-hunters, whatever their hunt, so take a taste of something short, young gentlemen, for it strikes me we have a long day before us yet."

If recollection bear me out, the hair of many heads which then grew luxuriantly are now somewhat grey, while others are gone to that home from which no traveller returns. I did take something short, in the way of half a glass of cognac, termed jumping water, and had it not been for the hunch of home-made bread and lump of cheese as an accompaniment, which I soon disposed

of, together with the exercise, it might have caused my seat to be less firm in the second run than it had been in the first. Dire was the slaughter made on loaves and cheese, beef and bacon, brandy and beer, that well-remembered morning. "By the powers!" said an Irishman who was present, a right pleasant fellow, and first-rate rider, "by the powers! I always thought butchers and bakers useful members of society in general—but till this morning I never did them justice, in particular."

As we rode forward with the hounds after this hospitable refreshment—hunter and whips having justly had their share—Harewood, whose conversation I appreciated, from his extreme modesty and knowledge of the noble science, still riding by my side,—there passed us one whom I have already named, who had joined the hunt thus late in the day—a no less personage than Hoofcut, mounted on a splendid bony hunter, accompanied by his daughter, whom I have previously alluded to, mounted on an animal, which, differing totally in form and style,

was a perfect specimen of a horse. As he passed us, Hoofcut saluted me, saying, "Good-day, Master Fred, is the Squire, your worthy father, here? I told you, you would see me at Allington Gorse, though it's a smart distance from home. But Mary would come, and I could not say, nay."

"And you did right, dear father, for the day is so fine, and the field so large, and the hounds looking so well—besides, I am determined to shew Master Fred the way over Malstone Vale, for, if we find to-day, go there we shall ere nightfall, be assured."

With what admiration—no, that is not the term—with what positive feelings of respect and esteem, young as I was, I looked in those days on Mary Hoofcut, Veterinary's daughter though she was; indeed, I was not singular in my liking, for she was a general favourite with all the country round—and in truth she deserved to be so, for her admirable qualities of mind and heart: firm as a rock when she judged herself right—she was gentle and forgiving when she knew herself to be wrong, which

she rarely was. Though by no means improperly educated, she possessed abilities and sound sense far beyond her station—combined, however, with a delicacy of mind and gentleness of disposition which, while it led her to delight in the association of those of superior birth, if not attainments, also produced a kindness and simplicity of manners towards her inferiors, who soon ascertained they had nothing in common with her—but yet could never deny her kindness of disposition, her friendliness of action, as her admirable conduct. Such was the only child of our eccentric friend, Hoofcut; and if one higher quality may be added to the many she possessed, it was that she endeavoured with the most tender assiduity to fill that place in her father's home, made painfully void by the early loss of a doating mother—and what other but a loved and loving daughter could so well have filled it. And yet it will be my sorrow, as was it of many hundreds more, to speak of how in her very earliest youth, she was also taken from among us. And who then suffered more from that loss,

who felt it more acutely, whose life was embittered by it, more than that of my poor friend Selwyn. But I must for to-day, at least, cast away all thoughts of sorrow, for the sun shines brightly, and the world smiles upon all the gallant cavalcade, who hasten on towards the Gorse. Among them poor Mary, the admired of all beholders, pretty to use a simple English word she was not, nor fair in the world's estimation. But her figure, as she gracefully reined in her noble steed, was as far as could be perfect; and her dress also, save that she wore no veil to her well placed hat, which, if not altogether feminine in appearance, was dispensed with, to save its being rent to tatters when passing through fences. Her costume had no pretensions, the dark habit fitted close to a shape which required no extra skirt, or vulgar finery to improve it; her small hands had no gauntlets, but warm, well fitting buckskin gloves; her plain white collar is turned back over her habit, and around her swan-like throat a dark blue silk handkerchief is tied, alike the colour of the hunt, as to protect her.

from the weather. Poor, poor Mary—in word and action the most gentle of her sex—as she sat her noble horse so firmly, gracefully, and her dark eyes flashing under the shadow of her jet-black hair, braided round her high forehead, her mouth ever smiling from cheerfulness of heart, I really thought her then, and memory confirms those thoughts, that she was the most graceful and yet the most unpretending horsewoman I ever beheld. And although I confess that I love not generally to see women in the chase, her riding was so admirable, and so void of ostentation or intrusion to those who had often much difficulty to catch her, that she was ever welcome in the hunting field. But I see her now with the eye of pleasant recollection, put her horse Bavieca, for so she was pleased to call him, into a canter, and lifting her light whip, as she passed me with inoffensive yet playful manner, say, Come along, Master Fred, the hounds have reached the Gorse, we must be there to hear the first note from the gallant pack, which

will lead us to victory. And then patting the neck of the beautiful animal she rode, the horse acknowledged her touch, and seemed to bound over the earth.

CHAPTER XVII.

UNDER the shelter of a small covert, looking westward were assembled as gallant and well mounted a body of horsemen as any county of old England, Melton perhaps excepted, could produce.

At least six score horses might be counted, one-half of that number being of a superior class.

At the moment of our joining the eager throng, all anxious and ready for the fray, many a merry joke was passing, or some badinage here and there went round, for the joyous laugh was heard; but all were excited with expectation in the hope of a sure find. The huntsman rode forward, and,

touching his cap, asked the noble owner of the pack if he should draw first a small covert at hand, and then try a somewhat extensive gorse which lay below us; or I should, speaking truly, say to the left or southward of where we were assembled.

"Try the Gorse, try the Gorse," said his Grace, "by all means, it generally holds, and the day is getting on."

In an instant every hound was in covert.

I now caught the eye of Ploughshare, in the act of tightening the girths of his lanky Chesnut, who exclaimed, "Well, Master Fred, we are at Allington Gos at last." While Arty, who rode up at the moment, and shook hands with Mary, or May, as he called her, said, "Recollect, Fred, if we find the battle will be severe, should I be taken prisoner in a mud pond, or perchance be left among the slain, I leave my kit to thee, brother mine, and a lock of my hair to you, May. But here comes Selwyn, on Parchment, looking like Romeo, so I must leave him with his Juliet." No time was allowed, however, for billing, cooing, or talking. A

well-known hound spoke, another and another, then the whole pack joined in one melodious chorus left the Gorse in a body, turned sharply to the right, and in another minute two score of hard riders had cleared a stiff rail and ditch, and were racing over a large grass field. The pace was such for a mile as to admit of my seeing only the elder Harewood two horses' length before me. I had determined on this occasion to follow him, and I was right, had he succumbed and I had still powder left I should have fought alone. But such was the pace we had started with, it was quite beyond the lasting powers of man, horse, or hound; still the race continued, till we reached a well known covert in the hunt called Stanwell Park, here the Varmint hung for a moment, and Mary rode up, as had she merely taken a canter in the Park, and said, "this is only the commencement of the run, few will live to the end of it." Alas that this—a mere cheerful allusion to the chase—should have proved true, at least as regards herself, the only female present.

But we are away again. A high stone wall with a drop into a road stops for a moment some few who hitherto had been going well, but my boyish weight was light, my horse good, and Harewood an admirable horseman in the van. Ploughshare succumbed at this wall, but as usual he fell cleverly, while Mary took it splendidly, and gathering the noble Bavioca together, was over the next fence and away ere we had time to select a place. On the right were the Duke, Squire Western, Selwyn, Arty, and many first-rate men; while the huntsman and another gentleman, whose name I now forget, led the left squadron. But Harewood and his brother were as good riders as any in the field, while few could beat poor Mary, or Hoofcut himself, when he chose to ride, and where they rode so rode I.

Twenty minutes had now elapsed since the fox broke covert, while the pace had little diminished, and forward was the cry, over hill and dale, gate and fence, the field diminished and diminishing. Offspray covert three-

quarters of a mile a head, a large covert generally full of foxes, and no earths stopped, who knows, we may change or have to dig. But no, luckily no, he disdains either earth or woodland shelter, hangs but for a moment to make a slight half circuit of the covert, and is once more away again, faster and faster than ever; we dash through the rides, heavy from recent rains, bespattering one another with mud, pass from the woodlands and descend a heavy ploughed field, at the bottom of which an ugly fence presented itself. "Never saw I a worse," said the huntsman, as he approached it at a gallop, with little time to consider. "Shall I describe it?" yes, I will, in order that those who may perchance to meet with a similar one may be enabled to get over it; to me, I must confess, that it appeared at first impracticable, and I held the Friar in the hope that some more experienced and heavier sportsman would clear the way for me. To those who may fancy that nothing is easier than to ride to a pack of hounds, racing over an enclosed country, if so be the horse on which

they are mounted can gallop, I can imagine their astonishment and dismay at coming face to face with a very high bank, approached by heavy slippery ground inclining towards its base, on the top of which is a flourishing thick alder hedge, and beyond, on the far side, a deep wide ditch, into which, if not fixed in the alders, you must either drop with the probability of remaining there the rest of the day, or being drowned for choice, without you jump it clear, a feat which even the very best of hunters, handled by a first-rate rider, might be pardoned, did he fail to perform in ; while at the end of the field behold a very high gate, quite new, locked, with hinges secured from intrusion ; the landing into a narrow lane covered with new laid stones, and this the only exit towards the hounds.

To use a sporting term, this ugly rasping fence at first appeared a pounder, but the hounds were running two fields a head, and many good men were there who would have faced the Thames at such a moment. The first who charged it was Selwyn, well and firmly

seated on Parchment; at a hand gallop he approached the difficulty—the noble horse did not hesitate—the spot selected was certainly the weakest—crash went the alders, and, wonderful to relate, for those who were an eye-witness to the feat, horse and rider landed safely in the field beyond, and followed fast on the hounds. The breach having thus been stormed, others were ready and eager to follow; and the next who rode at it was one of the Duke's Leicestershire friends, almost at a racing pace, he charged the obstacle, and the gallant beast he rode apparently without effort or touching a twig also cleared it safely, then came the huntsman, his well trained horse jumped among the branches, and landed successfully. I then approached the fence, but the Friar pulled hard and eagerly; while, as is the case with most young riders, I possibly hung too heavily on his bridle, and the consequence was well nigh fatal; a stiff root caught his hind leg, he pitched on his head, and precipitated me, not into but literally over the wet ditch, into the opposite field, and there

for a moment I lay alone in my glory. The Friar, however, luckily recovered himself, and having jumped the ditch was caught by one of the whips, who kindly helped me to mount; and away, away again we rode, faster and faster o'er the plain. All this, however, occurred in less time than I have taken to relate it.


While the horsemen on the left were thus proceeding, and I still followed the elder Harewood, who held his own manfully, those on the right, among whom numbered Squire Western, with many other good men and true, as also poor Mary, had their difficulties to contend with, to avoid the awkward fence we had surmounted. They had diverged rather too much from the line of the pack, thus having to encounter Marmouth Brook at the very widest point; while the leading men of both parties were riding almost in a line, we had therefore also to face the water, but at a much easier place, and the difficulty was passed without mishap of any kind. Not so with those headed by the Lord of Brooklands, down a sharp declivity of grass

they rattled ; time there was none for selecting a good spot to take off from, or a good bottom to jump into. Corbeau, however, true as steel, took it in his stride. The next man who approached it, and a good man was he, charged it as he would a squadron of cuirassiers ; when his horse, probably slipping from the heavy state of the banks, horse and rider almost disappeared beneath the muddy stream. While others met a similar fate ; two or three only getting clear over, the unfortunate ones appearing well drenched at the end of the run. Showing they were not born to be drowned, or disposed to succumb to water.

Among the number who approached this disastrous brook, was Hoofcut's daughter ; had she been leading at the time, I doubt not but that she would have faced it boldly ; and being mounted on a first-rate hunter, would possibly have shewn the way to the rest of the field. As it was, she witnessed the various disasters I have named ; but was saved from encountering the same mishap herself by a labourer at hand, who shouted

loudly from the further end of the field, and pointed out a place where a low wall being jumped, the bottom was sound and gravelly; and thus she soon caught the hounds again, accompanied by a lucky few, who in this instance were fortunate enough to follow her.

Away and away, over hill and dale, flees the gallant fox. Behold the ancient tower of Lansford Abbey in the distance. At least twelve miles have been ridden over; die he must; no hound or horse can live the pace. Already two-thirds of a large field are shaken off, while many who still hold on, will soon cry hold enough. His Grace of Gloucestershire, mounted on a second horse, as also his Leicestershire friends, were well up; while Corbeau, and Selwyn on Parchment, with the huntsman, were in front, as also the young man with moustaches, who had ridden well in the first run; while two or three of the hunt, in blue, were steadily at work. Poor Mary was also there, and the Harewoods, and Fred Western, and may be some others; but whereas two hundred horsemen and more



had assembled that fresh and joyous morning at Allington Gorse not an hour since, scarce five-and-twenty could now be counted.

"Forwards, forwards," cried the huntsman.

"We kill him for a thousand in Credennden Wood," adds Selwyn.

"Hold on, brave Corbeau," said Mr. Western, "this pace can never last."

"He 'll not touch the Wood," exclaimed the younger Harewood, "but away for the large coverts of Bagstock, in the White Horse country; and if so, look out for the canal. Is it fordable?"

"There's a swing bridge or two on the line," observed one of the hunt, "but no fox that ever saw light will stand thus far before the Duke's hounds."

"Forwards, forwards," again shouted their leader, "he gains the Lansford Woods." And luckily for the few then up, who were nursing their horses, he did so. Nevertheless, he disdained their refuge, and after hanging for a minute or two, and causing a slight check, thus allowing us a momentary

breather, he was off again and away. Harewood had predicted truly, however; for he thence turned to the right, and after crossing the canal, which was doubtless refreshing, he made direct for the Bagstock coverts; luckily there was a bridge at hand, over which we rattled; from thence, however, crossing some large water meadows, sufficiently deep to try the remaining powers of our horses. And light as I was, I felt that the Friar, who had only recently been located in the Brookland stables, had well nigh had enough. Where were now many of the field who had started so fresh that morning? I knew not. What had become of Ploughshare? Who could say? He might be sticking in a muddy ditch, or drowned in the canal. All I saw clearly was the figure of the gallant Mary, who rode steadily forward on my right, while Corbeau appeared to be still going as if made of iron and whalebone.

"Take me to the end of this day," exclaimed Selwyn, cheering his horse Parchment, as he crashed through a bull-finch, making an

opening for the rest of us, "take me to the end of this run, and you shall have rest for the remainder of your life."

"He must be a rare horse to do it," replied one of the hunt, who was then dismounting, "I gave three hundred for Peter, but he is dead beat, and I will not break his heart, though it almost breaks mine to give in." And he looked completely what he said.

But at this moment an obstacle appeared before us that would have tried the nerve of a good man, mounted on a first-rate horse, at the early part of the run. What then was it, to men and horses after such a chase? Yet when do Englishmen flinch, even if danger there be, with a gallant fox in the van, close followed by an eager pack.

"It is a stopper, and no mistake," I said to myself rather too loudly, feeling that the Friar was not going so firmly. "Not a bit of it," added young Harewood, who now came up, and gathering his horse firmly together, boldly faced it full gallop, and got clear over a stiff double post and rails,

a high bank, with a new laid hedge, and a ditch beyond. Suffice, we all followed him — almost simultaneously — but with different results. The well-conditioned horse of Harewood the elder jumped on the bank and off again. Selwyn charged the whole, when Parchment smashed the rails without falling. Had I availed myself of this opening, as did others, all would have been well. But, alas! my spirit was backed by my pride, and with more nerve than wisdom I selected a place of my own, and charged it as young Harewood had done. But whether the Friar had lost wind, or that I rode nervously, I know not, for although he rose fairly, and cleared the first rail, he slipped on the bank, rolled over, and deposited himself, as his rider, in the ditch on the other side. For one moment, as I lay on my back, looking at the blue heaven above me, I felt my hunting days were over, and the Friar defunct.

But I was happily mistaken, and soon found that although I was a damp moist body, that body was quite sound. More-

over, the Friar had still a gallop remaining, for having made a few successful struggles, he regained his legs as did I—we were up and off again,—never, however, to recover my place in the run—all I could do was steadily to follow in the chase ; in so doing, I passed more than one discomfited hero leading a horse no longer able to carry him. I gained the last field, however, ere the fox was quite broken up, and if I did not actually hear the whoo-hoop, I carried home, at least, a trophy which I shall treasure up through life. Nothing, however, could get the poor Friar over the last fence—he was, in fact, as many a better horse, quite done. Though I question, whether had he been a month or two, instead of half that time in the Brooklands stables, he would not have been fairly in at the death. All I remember, is this fact—that having ridden him three or four times unsuccessfully at a fence, which in the early part of the run he would have galloped over, I dismounted, and clambering over the hedge, cried out to my father—who numbered among the half dozen actually up

at the finish. "I'm here, Dad, I'm here, Mr. Selwyn—the Friar gave me a bad fall." "The deuce he did," said Selwyn; "you were not hurt, boy—were you? never lad rode better in the best of runs I ever witnessed."

Thus ended the most exciting and fastest run with hounds, it was ever my good fortune to ride to—no greater proof than this fact, when the fox was found, the field numbered at least two hundred; when the fox was killed, there was not half a dozen present—at the death, not a score in sight. Like an extended battle-field; fearful was the amount of wounded and missing; and my heart bleeds in recollection of the dead.

"Where are we?" I exclaimed, when my pulse once more beat steadily as I stood beside the Friar, whose tail was nervously shaking. "That you may well ask, Sir," replied the huntsman—who looked at his weary hounds, and then at his still more weary horse. "But I fancy we are somewhere in the White Horse country; and at

least twenty-five miles from the kennel. As for you, Mr. Western, you'll have a long and dark ride to Brooklands, I take it, without you put up with his Grace to-night ; he will be glad to talk over such a run as this has been—as will our stable lads do their duty by Corbeau."

"Well, I know that"—said my beloved Dad ; who had thoroughly enjoyed the sport, and ridden as well, if not better than any one of the field. "Well, I know that—but, unluckily, I have some friends at home ; yet who could foresee what we have actually witnessed ? a run—full eighteen miles from find to finish. No, we must move homewards as best we can—and I fancy our point will be Marston. What say you, leave our horses there and post homewards—we can get a chaise, I presume ?"

"Yes, Squire ! I fancy you might ; my road is two miles on your line." And with this, the cavalcade—but a few hours since all excitement, strength, and spirits—moved slowly homewards. The huntsman leading, with the Lord of Brooklands by his side ;

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and several of us, among whom was Selwyn, quietly following.

I have frequently, in after years, when thinking of this delightful fox-chase, asked myself the cause of the extreme depression, which, young as I was, I felt when it was over; a depression, which I confess frequently to have felt in after years, after the termination of a good run.

This feeling seemed really to have overtaken every one present—more particularly Selwyn—who, at last turning towards me, said, “What became of Mary, Fred?”

“I saw her within two miles of the finish going well,” I replied—“and her horse was tolerably fresh; how well she rides—possibly she did not think we were so near the kill.”

“Possibly,” he replied, “and turned homewards; I trust we may see her at Marston, and I will send her horse over to-morrow with mine, and get her to go home in a chaise.”

The night came on dark and drizzly ere we reached Marston. Further, we could

not have gone—for all the horses were beaten. Here we obtained a chaise. Selwyn joined us, and we rattled homewards, at ten miles an hour; but the dinner was not then served quite so late as it now is in these days; and we considered half-past six sufficiently aristocratic at the Old Hall at home.

When we arrived, not a little anxiety was depicted on the countenance of my sweet mother, as on that of dear Gussy, who, as the chaise drew up to the door, had rushed into the Hall to meet us, in full dinner dress, all the expected guests having arrived at least an hour previously. “Thank God, you are come at last,” said my mother, “I feared some accident had occurred;” with eyes overflowing and looking at her boys.

“Accident,” exclaimed my younger brother, “none, I am happy to say; save the accident of a splendid run.”—“And you, dear Fred,” added Gussy, “are you hurt? for I see you are covered with mud from head to foot.”

“Hurt! no, Popsy darling. I fall light,

and the mud was all softness, as are your
lex, but not so agreeable."

"Order the dinner to be served at once,"
said Mr. Western, "the Duke's haunch, I
fear, will be spoilt. Make my apologies; a
sportsman's apologies will be understood.
Come along, Selwyn, I can lend you some-
thing in the way of adornment."

All I can recollect at this distant time of
that pleasant dinner party, was the fact of
Selwyn having appeared in the red coat in
which he had hunted, and a pair of black
tights, somewhat loose about the calves of
his legs, at which we all laughed. That I
sat next to a young lady at dinner, who, for
ought I know to the contrary, may since
have become the happy mother of seven
small children, who was fearfully marked
with the small-pox, but who was nevertheless
admitted to be one of the most agreeable
women in the county, as to have the prettiest
foot.

That the first crimped Severn salmon of
the season was unanimously pronounced
excellent; as was the haunch, notwithstand-


ing our delay ; and that I fell fast asleep, and snored loudly, from absolute fatigue, the moment the cheese was placed on the table ; and was awakened at dessert by the young lady in question having put a piece of ice to my lips ; passed a very pleasant evening, and went to bed late.

But, alas, how restless was my sleep ; as is ever the sleep of fevered fatigue. Now I slept soundly—then struggled from the nightmare, and fancied that I had fallen at a fence, and that my leg was broken. Again I saw Mary struggling under her horse, and waking up in a fearful perspiration, my thoughts reverted to the lady who had been my companion at the dinner table. Such were the wild fancies which a fevered imagination created. And then I went to sleep again, and slept soundly, till the shutters being thrown aside by the footman who entered my room to call me, I beheld the sun of a winter's morning struggling vainly through the mist. That sun was the last, unalloyed by the cares and sorrows of the world, which ever rose on the path of my life.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE SUNSHINE OF LIFE.

I WAS still stiff and tired from the fatigue and excitement consequent on the pleasures of the previous day ; and had determined to enjoy a little extra repose, having already sent a coaxing message to the pet Gussy, informing her that I was not quite well, and that a nice breakfast tray, with a covered basin of creamy tea, a little hot buttered toast, a muffin, an egg, the broiled leg of a fowl, or the cold leg of a pheasant, would be acceptable ; in fact, suggesting that a few such enticing trifles would be acceptable to



an invalid ; when a sharp rap sounded on my chamber door, evidently the rap of no female knuckles. "Come in," I shouted, half rising from my bed, "who knocks so loudly at the castle gate."—"I," replied a voice, which at the moment I scarcely recognized, "And who may I be?" "Why I'm stagnated, but you're still in bed at this hour ; it's after ten, Master Fred." And thus introducing himself, Forster proceeded to inform me, as he stood like a giant near my bed, looking unusually sad, that the fog was so thick you might ladle it up with a soup ladle ; that the poachers would have a few pheasants ; and that his honour, the Squire, had breakfasted, and gone to his study with a tear in his eye ; that his darling Miss Gussy, was a weeping herself to a thread-paper in the parlour ; and, in fact, that all the household, as all the neighbourhood, were by that time lamenting the loss of the best —. "What or whom," I almost screamed, "is the King dead."—"No."—"Is my Mother ill? The Earl, the Duke, or the huntsman?"—"Be calm, Master

Fred," said the good old man, "be calm, I'm stagnated." The poor man really appeared to be so; for his eyes were now overflowing. I saw in a moment that something was wrong, and that of no common order; and I said at once, "Pray keep me no longer in suspense."—"Well, sir, I'm stagnated, but what God wills is sure to come to pass. Poor Mary Hoofcut is dead and gone."

"Mary Hoofcut dead and gone," I exclaimed, and truly I felt at the moment as if I were about to die myself. But yesterday in all the pride of life and health, and overflowing spirits, she rode among us the gayest of the gay. Much liked, even loved, for her excellent qualities and simple virtues; full of happy anticipation for the future, and right joyous in the present. Little more thought I of idling away the morning in bed. No, indeed. I was all anxiety to hear full particulars of the sudden and mournful death of one, whom I had known from my earliest childhood, whose lips never uttered to me at least ought but words of kindness, and whose actions were ever directed by

courtesy and good feeling. As I hastened to dress myself, I asked innumerable questions of the good old man, who still lingered in my room, with a head bowed low, and eyes overflowing with tears of heartfelt sorrow. It was, I may name, his constant habit to come to our rooms in the morning, either to relate some jocular tale of the neighbourhood—information in reference to the hounds—of woodcocks he had flushed—poachers frightened, or foxes unkennelled in the Brookland coverts—but this morning his merriment was gone ; his avocation silent. Indeed, had his pride and pet, my young sister Gussy, been dead, instead of her for whom he grieved, he could scarce have evinced much more sadness.

“ Well,” said I, “ this is painful indeed. But tell me some particulars ; how did it happen ? What was the cause ? An accident, doubtless. But was it in the hunting field ; or where ? When last I saw her, she was riding cheerfully, and well.”

“ May be so, Master Fred—may be so. I’m stagnated ; but I know nothing ’ticular,

save, poor lass, that she is dead, and gone from among us. And 'tis said that Mr. Selwyn is well nigh beside himself. He were main attached to her. His worshipful honour, your honourable papa, will tell you all; he is fretting sadly below stairs, and Miss Guzzy, and all."

Followed by poor Forster, I hastily descended and entered the breakfast room, and there, sure enough, I found the whole party in affliction.

The Lord of Brooklands, as many kindly termed him, as was his custom, was standing with his back to the fire, looking sad and sorrowful. Gussy's eyes were red from weeping, and all the party as dolorous within as was the weather without. "How has this lamentable event occurred," I said, taking my father's hand; "poor Mary."

"Lamentable, indeed, my dear Fred, to be taken thus early before her God in the pride of life. Well, well, may she be received into a better world; she knew but little of the sins and sorrows of this."

“ But what was the cause of her sudden death ?”

“ I will tell you. Her faithful Bavioca, for the first time, made a false step, and killed her. That is, she was taking a large fence at the termination of yesterday’s run, when the noble animal put his foot into a grip, and, when struggling violently to recover himself, the pommel of her saddle gave way, she fell heavily forward, and, dreadful to relate, literally broke her neck.”

“ Poor Selwyn,” I exclaimed, “ what will become of him. How fondly attached he was to that poor girl.”

“ Indeed he was, poor fellow, and she deserved his truthful attachment, and would have made him an admirable wife ; true, her station was not precisely his—what then, her education, as her conduct, was beyond all praise, and she would have made him a happy man. But she is gone, and God alone can give him strength to support her loss. But in thinking of her, as of those who loved her, we forget him whose affection for her

was the greatest of all, and whose affliction will be the most severe, her poor father. An only and motherless daughter—who will fill her place in his heart and home? None, no, not one. I must write to the poor old man, and at least tell him there are many hearts who bleed in unison with his own.” Consolation from the true-hearted is balm in the hour of sorrow, and such was Mr. Western.

I can recollect nothing in my early life that I felt so bitterly, as did I this sad event. Alas, as sudden as it was sad, I felt it, as did we all, in the old Hall at home, not the less for her taken from among us, than for him who remained.

On her parent’s heart the blow fell heavily, and well nigh crushed him, for he was already advancing in life, and two short years afterwards he lay beside her in the churchyard.

On her lover, the effect was annihilating. “Had I heard her last words,” he exclaimed, to my father, almost the only one to whom he ever named her; “had I heard her last

kind word, I could have borne it all more like a man. You know we were betrothed. You know, the only cause which delayed my happiness, was the noble idea, on her part, that her station scarcely fitted her to be my wife ; but that I had at last overcome, by untiring proofs of my real affection ; and when the leaf came on the tree again, she would have been mine for ever. Alas, had she died with her hand in mine, my name on her lips, I should have been more calm. God willed it otherwise. But hark you, Western, trifling though the apparent cause of my additional grief, that trifle sinks deeply into the heart that fondly loves. You knew well her firm character, her warm affection, at times her apparently trifling hasty disposition, with strong animal courage, ever ready to laugh at danger in the hunting-field, as would she, I believe, have borne herself in the battle-field.

“ Well, I warned her not seldom to be more careful, but particularly so on the day of her sad death ; and we had what the world terms a lover’s quarrel—and most

truly was it merely a lover's quarrel—but the hounds were running, and we forgot to make it up—and although weak I may be to think more of it now I have lost her precious self, it nevertheless goes to my heart's core now she is gone."

"What was it all about?" asked my father—"a mere trifle, I'll be bound; she loved you well, Selwyn, she loved you well, so respect her memory, and be a man."

"That am I," he replied, "and one to whom she was so dear, that my future life will be but a living death. We were both riding at a large fence, when I exclaimed, Mary, darling, I implore you to be more careful—you ride far too fearlessly."

"Nonsense, nonsense," she replied, "go along, and never mind me."

"But I do mind you," I added, "and you shall not ride like a mad woman."


"I will," she added; "and recollect I am not your wife yet, and do not know that I ever shall be."

"Nonsense, Mary darling, nonsense, as you say to me, you shall not ride as you

do—and with this she dashed over a high fence, and we never met again in life. It is true that she did so with a smile on her lips, and an arch look of kindness in her eyes—and this will ever be my consolation, if consolation can ever reach my broken heart.”

“And well may it be, Selwyn, if you ever doubted the love of that true-hearted girl.”

But enough of this sad story. It was midnight of the day we had met so joyfully at Allington Gorse, that Selwyn was aroused from a deep sleep, overcome by the fatigue and excitement he had gone through. As I have said, he had returned with us to Brooklands, instead of going home to the Lodge. But I had neither heard the messenger, who came to the back of the house, nor had I been aroused by his departure, as I slept in a wing of the Hall remote from his apartment. I was, however, subsequently informed, that when told that a sad accident had happened to Miss Hoofcut, he appeared as one paralysed—but recovering himself, he called for a glass of wine, and, without



uttering another word, mounted a hack, and rode, dark as was the night, to Hoof-cut's residence, twelve miles' distant, within the hour. On his arrival there, being imprudently admitted without caution, he rushed to her usual apartment, and there beheld, stretched on a bed, the corpse of her whom he had loved with the whole heart's love of a man who had passed the fiery ordeal of youthful passion, and felt with all the depth and intensity of a man in his meridian. At the side of her bed, knelt her unhappy, heart-broken parent—while the medical man, who had known and esteemed them for long years, stood in silence and in sorrow, for well he knew that no skill of his could revive her, as that the consolation of man at such a moment would be rather an insult than an act of friendship. But his professional services were soon required again—poor Selwyn, who had hastened into the room, under all circumstances unadvisedly, yet with the feeling that her he so fondly loved had possibly broken a leg, arm, or rib, but would be spared to him—in the meantime desirous to

act as nurse, menial, or ought else, to tend her while suffering, stood for one moment aghast, as he first looked on the clay-cold corpse, then at the kneeling father, and again at the pallid face in death of her he had so idolized in life—and then, overpowered by the full gush of agonised feelings, fell senseless on the floor.

So terrible were the effects of his grief, that a succession of fainting fits followed; indeed, it was sometime before he was sufficiently recovered to be put to bed, in the same house with the corpse of her to whom till then few imagined him to be so warmly attached. For a month he lay there—now raving, now apparently insensible to all around him. Grief, however terrible, nevertheless rarely kills, notwithstanding the deep inroads it makes on a hitherto strong constitution. And in poor Selwyn's case, although physical powers and a good constitution gained the day, when he arose from his bed of sickness, debilitated and care-worn, to return to his once cheerful home at the Lodge, he went there an altered

man. The happy and open-hearted smile no longer lighted up his amiable countenance, no longer, as in former days, did he associate with the neighbourhood—seldom, indeed, was he seen without the house; and notwithstanding the repeated attempts made by my dear father, during our absence, my mother, as also his favourite, Gussy, to cheer him, and induce him to visit the Hall, they were in vain. His favourite hunters were sold; Anderson, though still a lingerer about the house, pensioned off; one horse alone being retained, but that one had been ridden by poor Mary. In fact, the Lodge was no longer a home of happiness and hospitality, and Selwyn, in whose society we had so well loved to find ourselves, became a broken-hearted, invalid recluse.

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